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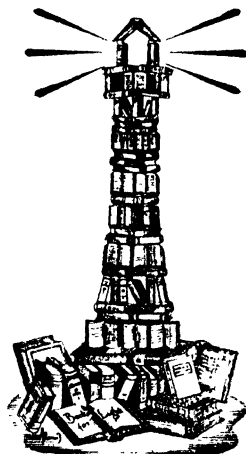


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# THE INDIAN DEADLOCK



K. M. MUNSHI



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## PREFACE

This series of articles was begun with a view to give an Indian's reactions to Prof. Coupland's work on the constitutional problem of India. By the very nature of my pro-occupations, I had to do the work piecemeal, and the articles when ready were published from time to time in the weekly "Social Welfare."

It was originally intended that my friend Mr. J. M. Shelat, M. A., Bar-at-Law, would help me for the whole series. But ill-health prevented him from helping me except in the case of three chapters. I have to express my gratitude to him for it.

The last chapter was written after the Sapru Committee was appointed, and I have recast my views in the form of a memorandum to that Committee, which I was invited to submit.

The history of the last 150 years of British rule is a history of conflict between India and her foreign rulers. The history has assumed different shapes and patterns, but the central theme has remained unchanged. Every situation is a bye-product of a clash between the National Will to Freedom and the foreigners' Will to fasten serfdom on the country. So is the deadlock that prevails today.

But if in our anxiety to secure the transfer of power from Britain, any step is taken to

disrupt the integrity of India or its institutional continuity, it will be fraught with incalculable danger. Much as I would see the banner of freedom held aloft at all moments, I dread to lose the Nation's integrity which obtains in the shape of the political unity of the country. That is why, though believing in the efficacy of Satyagraha and its necessity as a weapon of warfare, I have not been able to share the view that withdrawal from governmental institution is necessarily a virtue.

Early in 1937 when urging the acceptance of office by the Congress, in the Press, I wrote :

The real objective of the Congress, therefore, is to prepare the country for a new life, a life in which mass movements characterised by strenuous resistance to all things anti-national alternate with intensive activity for gaining greater control over all forms of social organisations, governmental and non-governmental. During the present lull, therefore, the Congress has to seek every opportunity to bring all publicly organised activities under the control of well-drilled Congressmen under the direction of a single will.

A strong Centre is to my mind the supreme essential for India's progress, political, economic, as well as social and cultural. No progress, no future is possible without it. If I had my way, no compromise would be permitted without it.

In 1939 in *I follow the Mahatma* I wrote as follows :—

The British power at the Centre alone kept up the illusion that India as a whole was a nation and in reality we had in the Princes and the communal rivalries a real obstacle to overcome, before national solidarity could be achieved.

India cannot be a Dominion. Its internal complexity and its international frontiers by land and by sea made it more than a Dominion, if the British army and navy were replaced by the Indian substitutes and less than a Dominion, if the British army and navy were retained.

When foreign rule is eliminated we want to be stronger and independent, not a prey to external danger or internal conflict.

I hope this work would help the country to think on lines which would lead it to Power and Freedom.

BOMBAY :  
*Independence Day, 1945.* }

K. M. MUNSHI

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## BRITISH CASE AGAINST INDIA

Prof. Coupland has modestly called his contribution to British political literature on the Indian problem as a Report.<sup>1</sup> It is not characterised by the clumsiness which is generally associated with Government inspired propaganda. With the lucidity of an Oxford don, the learned professor has unfolded his thesis, in which are cleverly blended historical aspects, facts and political speculations with the object of proving the futility and the barrenness of Indian Nationalism. The air of objectivity makes it all the more dangerous to clear thinking.

A slave—whether an individual or a nation—is under a cruel disadvantage. What he is and what his capabilities are, are decided by the master. What malady he is suffering from depends upon the master's diagnosis ; what cures have to be applied, upon the latter's self interest. India's capabilities, ailments, her weakness and its cure, have to be judged by the British from their point of view. For this purpose Prof. Coupland has furnished elaborate material.

The First Part of the Report is concerned

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[<sup>1</sup>*Report on the Constitutional Problem in India, Parts I, II & III.* Oxford University Press].



with the constitutional survey upto the introduction of the changes under the Government of India Act of 1935 ; the Second Part deals with the interim period from 1936 to 1942 ; the Third, and by far the most important, Part contains the case against Indian Nationalism, presented with the air of a trained academician and the adroitness of a clever fencer.

In the Second Part, as if preparing for the Third Part, the learned professor marshalls facts to show:

Firstly, that in non-Congress Provinces responsible government has operated more or less in accordance with the intentions of those who framed the Constitution Act.

Secondly, that Provincial Autonomy was negatived in the Congress provinces by reason of the "unitary" and totalitarian policy adopted by the "Congress High Command" and their policy of having ministries pledged to Congress loyalty, thus barring the way to coalition ministries. The word 'totalitarian'—which unthinking minds consider the last word in political abuse—is brought into service subconsciously to condemn the supervision which the Congress Working Committee exercised in order to enforce policies to which the Congress was pledged.

Both these propositions, now the acknowledged armoury of anti-Indian official propaganda, carry with them deadly implications. If they are accepted without analysis, they would surely make Prof. Coupland's Third Volume

look less of political propaganda than what it really is.

The intention of framing the Act of 1935 as was repeatedly stated by British statesmen in and out of Parliament was to take India one step further on the roadway of 'progressive realization of responsible self-government' leading to the goal of full Dominion Status as contemplated in the Statute of Westminster. If this was the intention, the Coalition Ministries in certain provinces in India are anything but success, despite Lord Wavell's recent opinion to the contrary. Ministers without a backing in the legislature are chosen by the Governor or continued as a result of his goodwill; they are dismissed at the sweet will of the Governor. On several occasions parties without a programme or cohesion have been formed temporarily to provide pay and position for a few important members of the assembly; and the members once installed in power are known to hang on the Governor's goodwill rather than on the support of any party in the legislature. The Ministers are permitted freedom of action in unessentials. But in essentials it is otherwise. The Police, for instance, in important matters take their orders direct from the Governor, the Minister only registering the decree, if at all. The case of a Minister appealing to his white Secretary to agree to make an order has not been an unknown event. That a coalition ministry in India is a democratic facade behind which the Governor rules through the bureaucracy is a

fact which Prof. Coupland has omitted to register. He is too shrewd not to have noticed it. But everyone in India knows it, including the participants.

Prof. Coupland had before him facts—I gave him some—to show how the Congress Ministers acted consistently with British and Canadian principles of responsibility; how within the restricted sphere of provincial subjects they declined to deflect themselves from the degree of responsibility which Dominion ministries enjoyed in other parts of the Commonwealth; how a Governor like Sir Roger Lumley scrupulously upheld the best traditions of the Governor of a responsible Dominion.

Prof. Coupland, despite this knowledge, has preferred the first type of ministries to the second, considering them to be the type envisaged by the framers of the Act. The inference is obvious. Either the framers under the guise of putting up responsible government were only putting up frauds on democracy; or Prof. Coupland would like to have such frauds established in all the provinces in India to suit his *a priori* idea as to what freedom India should have in the future.

The facts, however, remain. The Congress Prime Ministers asked for an assurance that the Governor's discretion should be held in abeyance. The Congress Ministries acting in the highest tradition of responsible ministries worked in the best interests of their provinces. The British statesmen time and again were moved

to compliment the Congress ministries on their strength and impartiality. The Governor-General and the Governors were loath to part with them in November 1939, and for some months tried to wean them back to office. Till May-June of 1940 British statesmen were anxious to get back the 'totalitarianism' of the Congress High Command, so long, however, as the Congress gave up its claim to a transfer of power at the centre. Only when the Congress Ministries refused to go back to office, on account of the British refusal to part with power at the centre, official propaganda put forward the so-called 'totalitarianism' of the Congress High Command as a stunt to encourage reactionary elements in the country to rally round the Government against the Congress.

Prof. Coupland in his Report has supported this propaganda.

## II

### WHO WAS TOTALITARIAN ?

Prof. Coupland's misuse of the word 'totalitarian' warps the logic of his thesis. 'Totalitarian' in the accepted sense of the term means that characteristic of authority which exercises control over all spheres of life, leaving no freedom to the individual. In that sense the Congress High Command was not totalitarian. It never sought to stifle individual freedom ; it never exercised control over all spheres of life. All that the Congress Working

Committee did was to win the elections in ten out of thirteen provinces on a specific programme in 1937. Then it guided the Provincial Congress parties to select leaders it trusted. It extracted assurances from the Governors, with the consent of His Majesty's Government, to hold in abeyance the 'discretion' given to them by the Act. It helped the ministries to implement the programme on which they had won elections. And lastly, it exercised a supervisory jurisdiction when a minister failed to carry out his duties consistently with the pledges the Congress had given to the people.

This is not totalitarianism ; if it is, every effective political party under a responsible government is guilty of it. By the very nature of democracy, a party machine which wins an election has to choose true instruments and has to see that the pledges which enabled it to win an election are faithfully implemented. The expulsion of so great a leader as Sir Stafford Cripps from the Labour Party shows that democratic parties are as vigorous in enforcing discipline as Fascist parties, the only difference being that in one case the punishment is expulsion, in the other death.

The Congress was in office in order to secure the transfer of power from British to Indian hands ; and it could not afford to commit political suicide by not making its ministries effective instruments of power. The under-

lying assumption of Prof. Coupland is that the ministries became Congress instruments of power against other parties. This is not true. They were instruments wielded against British power. This truth is ignored in Prof. Coupland's Report.

When the Congress Ministries took office as the representatives of the majority party in the legislatures, power was in British hands. The machinery of provincial governments consisted of the Civil Service, the Police, and the Judiciary. Of the Civil Service the chiefs were the Commissioners; of the Police, the I.G.P.; of the Judiciary, the I.C.S. District Judges. The powers of these high officials—mostly British or Indians attuned to British outlook—were conducted and supervised by the Secretaries under the vigilant eye of the Chief Secretary. The pay, prospects and promotions of most of these officers were governed by rules which could not be touched by the legislature but only by the Secretary of State, whose representative was the Governor. The Chief Secretary, the Commissioners and the I.G.P. were mostly British, bound to the Governor by ties of race and tradition and formed an instinctive pro-British alliance against Indians anxious to secure and exercise new found power. Their social contacts gave them scope for comparing notes and taking decisions.

Against this trained and serried phalanx the ministries had to assert the authority of the elected legislature. If I may misuse the

world 'totalitarian', as Prof. Coupland has, the ministries were charged with the task of breaking the totalitarian power of the Governor and the bureaucracy.

Under the Constitution Act, the Governor's totalitarianism was preserved in diverse ways :

First, the discretionary powers of the Governor were amply preserved at all effective points.

Second, his power to dismiss a minister as distinguished from the dismissal of the premier or dissolving the legislature, was also preserved.

Third, the Civilian secretary had direct access to the Governor behind the Ministers' back.

Fourth, in matters of discipline the higher officials had a right of appeal to the Governor or the Secretary of State.

Fifth, all orders had to be issued by and under the signature of the Secretary.

The Congress ministries—as for instance, the Bombay ministry, about which I had first-hand knowledge—resisted this gubernatorial totalitarianism in the following manner :—

Firstly, the Governor had to give an assurance to keep in abeyance his discretionary power, with the result that the exercise of the discretion became a first class constitutional issue involving immediate resignation.

Secondly, the ministries acted as a single unit for all purposes, so much so that a Cabinet meeting was in important matters reduced to a dialogue between the Governor and the Minister concerned, backed by all his colleagues.

In Bombay, our closed door ministerial conferences became a daily affair, at the end of which all ministers came out with one view—a thing which baffled many. But it had the effect of making the ministry the real centre of power.

Thirdly, by convention the Secretary was made to record the summary of his conversation with the Governor when he saw him and the Governor consulted the Minister in all actions which he proposed to take in matters which under the Act were subject to his discretion.

Fourthly, in matters of discipline of the higher services, ministers made a unanimous recommendation, leaving the Governor no alternative but to accept the recommendation or to dismiss the ministers.

At the same time all the ministers discussed matters frankly with the Governor, establishing a relationship which enabled the Governor to exercise his influence on the decision. The discussions by an individual minister with the Governor were reported to the Prime Minister.

In this way the ministry became a com-



pact instrument of popular power—like a Cabinet in England or a Dominion—drawing its strength from the majority party returned on as wide a franchise as in any civilized country.

The workings of the Coalition ministries in non-Congress provinces are well-known. The Governors use their discretion freely. The ministers are not a homogeneous body. Very often a Governor's 'goodwill' maintains a minister in power. A minister or ministers having an understanding with the Governor against his or their colleagues is a well-known feature. The Secretaries are known to have acted behind the ministers' back and in alliance with the Governor. At the Governor's instance police have watched the ministers' houses. Prime Ministers with the confidence of the legislatures have been dismissed. Ministers have disowned their parties, and thanks to the Governor, continued in office.

When Prof. Coupland, therefore, uses the word 'totalitarianism' he means that by reason of the cohesive influence of the Working Committee, the Congress ministries became effective instruments of power, subordinating the bureaucracy to its policies, and elevating the Governor to the pedestal of a constitutional monarch. The coalition ministries leave the Governor a complete master of ministries. Is this the form of democracy which this learned professor likes to perpetuate in India ?

### III

## PROF. COUPLAND'S CHARGE-SHEET

### 1. *Congress and The States ?*

The charge of Prof. Coupland against the Congress, as in 1937, is stated as follows :

On the morrow of their victory at the polls, the Congress had determined to strengthen their position (a) by forcing the pace of constitutional advance in the States ; and (b) by absorbing minority parties especially the Muslim League in the Congress organisation.

The first charge is (a) that the Congress in 1937 decided to force the pace of constitutional reforms ; and (b) that it was so decided in order to strengthen its position.

This charge carries the fallacies of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. For political purposes Britishers may divide India as Indian India and British India ; but the social and economic life of India is one and indivisible. The people of India are one, though some reside in British districts and others in Indian States. The languages, the social and religious life, and patriotism know no such distinction. For many years before 1937, the Congress as the highest organised expression of Indian Nationalism had evoked the loyalty and support of the people of Indian States.

The governance of many of the Indian

States was crude, inefficient, corrupt, largely influenced by palace intrigues. People from the States naturally turned to Congress leaders for guidance. As the leaders of the Nation they cannot but sympathise with the people of the States in their desire to alleviate their plight. But the Congress as a body resisted all attempts at interference. In 1934 December, Dr. Rajen Babu the then President, at the A.-I.C.C. meeting held at Madras threatened to resign if the A.-I.C.C. voted in favour of interference.

When the Congress was returned at the head of the polls in the elections of 1937, the people of the States experienced a natural feeling of strength. Some of the Indian Princes and their Dewans were anxious to make friends with the Congress and come into line with the British Provinces as regards constitutional reforms.

Take the Rajkot case which is in point. Sardar Vallabhbhai did not intervene of himself. The State authorities themselves sought his assistance in solving the differences between the State and its people. Accredited representatives of the State, including Sir Patrick Cadell, the ex-civilian Dewan of Rajkot, met him to help it out of the difficulty. Sardar Vallabhbhai went to Rajkot and settled the dispute between the State and its people.

Then the Political Department of the Government of India came on the scene. The State was reclaimed to strict obedience. It is a sorry tale. The terms that were settled

between the Sardar and the State were broken. Gandhiji went on a fast to preserve its integrity. Lord Linlithgow intervened to save his life. The Political Department was too powerful even for the Viceroy. Their policy was laid down by Lord Canning eighty years ago. The Indian Princes were to be powerful instruments of India's subjection to Britain. The Indian Princes were told to have nothing to do with Congress leaders. Tenacious of their dynastic rule, which has survived a thousand years of changing paramountcy, they rallied against the Congress under the directions of the Political Department. The achievements of Mr. Gibson in this direction remain unstudied by Prof. Coupland; or if he did study them, he forgot all about them when he wrote his Report.

Gandhiji closed the Rajkot affair by an open withdrawal. The Rajkot affair was the turning point. The British found that the Indian States were slipping out of their hands. In order to retain their hold over them they used the Indian Princes to stifle the liberalising movements going on in Indian States.

Another instance in point was when the trouble between Limbdi State authorities and its subjects was settled through my intervention in 1941. The settlement had to be abandoned because again the Political Department did not relish the friendly help of a British Indian public man connected with the Congress in the affairs of the State.

The Congress did not intervene in the affairs of the State. A process inevitable in an organically united country like India had set in after 1937. The Princes and their people wanted to adjust themselves to the new conditions which responsible governments in the Provinces had brought about. The British officials wanted to keep the Indian States as a preserve for their unrestricted power, and they forced the Princes to give up the attempts at adjustment.

This effort of the Political Department would have been of little avail had the Congress not parted company in November 1939 by its Ministries resigning. For in 1939, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow himself was unequivocally ready to force the pace of constitutional advance in the States. Only his instruments in the Political Department were not as ready as he would wish. Only when the Congress parted company from the British Government at the outbreak of the War, was this charge invented, as a stick to beat the Congress with.

Prof. Coupland, therefore, is in error when he attributes to Congress an intention to strengthen its position, in 1937, by forcing the pace of constitutional reforms ; for,

- (1) no such intention existed in 1937 ;
- (2) the intervention of Congress leaders was invited by the State authorities in 1938 ;
- (3) the Viceroy and the Congress Leaders in 1939 were working in co-operation to acceler-

ate the pace of constitutional reforms in the State ;

(4) after November 1939, when Congress Ministries resigned, the charge was invented by British propaganda to discredit the Congress.

#### IV

### THE CONGRESS AND COALITION MINISTRIES

Prof. Coupland's second charge against the Congress is that its mass contact programme was an attempt to merge the Muslim minority in the Congress ; that by refusing to accept coalition ministries with the Muslim League it wanted to absorb the Muslim minority in the Legislature, and become totalitarian ; and that it was as a result of this policy that the Pakistan issue came to the forefront as a menace to the integrity of the country. Even apart from Prof. Coupland, some critics both in India and Great Britain, particularly after the Congress surrendered the Ministries, have challenged the wisdom of the Congress leadership in refusing to set up multiple ministries. Official propaganda has been busy in attributing the growth of the Two Nations theory to the fact that the Congress set up their own ministries.

Underlying this charge is an unexpressed implication which is dangerous to the country as a whole and therefore unacceptable. That implication is that India is not a nation and

should never be a nation ; that it consists and should consist of the Hindu community and the Muslim community in constant conflict ; that the Congress is and must be a Hindu body ; that every attempt to enrol Muslim members in the fold of Nationalism is an attempt to submerge the minority. This is Mr. Jinnah's thesis. Curiously it is also Prof. Coupland's, though thinly disguised.

Nationhood is not a matter of religion or race, but it is one of communities purposively willing themselves into a nation and pursuing collective action under the urge of such a will. The antagonism which subsisted between the Hindus and Muslims in the past had been adjusted when the British came on the scene. The Great Indian Revolt of 1857 was a national revolt around the memories of the Mughal empire against the foreign domination of the East India Company. The Indian National Congress was similarly brought into existence by Hindus, Mussalmans and Europeans as the expression of the national will against the British domination of this country. From 1885 till 1909 the Hindus and Mussalmans were together on the Congress platform to fight foreign rule.

It is now established beyond controversy that a Britisher, Beck, taught Muslims the doctrine of separation. Mr. Archibold of Aligarh College organised the 'Command performance' of the Aga Khan for separate electorates for the Muslims, which was readily accepted by Lord

Minto in 1909. As a result the largest minority in the country was taught a separatist outlook to prevent the Indian Nation from acquiring strength. The separate electorates under the Morley-Minto Reforms were the British countermove against the National will which was asserted during the Bengal Partition movement.

Since that day the Indian Nation had to fight the British not merely on the political plane but on the communal plane to prevent the British from strengthening the separatist tendencies of the reactionary section amongst the Muslim. The Hindus wanted the Muslims as comrades ; the British saw to it that the Muslims constituted them their trustees against the Hindus. It was an agelong imperialist device.

In 1915, the Congress in an attempt to placate separationism accepted at Lucknow a compromise on the basis of separate electorates, which even Mr. Montague disapproved. The poison once introduced circulated fast enough by the stimulants which the British gave it from time to time. From and after the Montford Reforms it became the settled policy of the British officials in this country to treat India as Hindu and Muslim, and to look to the reactionary Muslims thrown up by separate electorates as representatives of the community.

In order to overcome this policy, Congress adopted two fundamentals : Resistance to alien



domination and amicable settlement of Hindu-Muslim differences. By reason of the Government's policy the second fundamental became closely interwoven with the first; the first required substantial if not entire unity, and unity in its turn was dependent on the success of the other. On account of the strenuous efforts of the Congress, which had by then come under the leadership of Gandhiji, to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity, the British policy was concentrated on employing every volt of diplomatic energy in seeing that the communal problem became more and more intricate.

From separate electorates the Muslims were encouraged to ask for redistribution of provinces with a view to secure a balance of power. From the British point of view it was a first class device for checkmating national progress. It was Ramsay Macdonald's award that perpetuated the array of Muslim provinces against Hindu provinces thus introducing a constitutional barrier to national government. The Congress in search of ways and means to overcome this poison began a programme of enlisting a large number of Muslims in its rank so as to present the British with a united National Demand.

The Congress with the objective of attaining full freedom and communal unity was returned at the polls in 1937. The Muslim League candidates who were returned to the legislature formed a small fraction of the total of the Muslim representatives in the legislature. No one till then ever dreamt that it was a sin

for a party like the Congress to form its own ministries.

In the situation which the legislatures faced in 1937 coalition or multiple ministries were out of question. The Muslim League had not sufficient number of Muslim members to start with. Among the independents there was a good number of Muslim members wanting to be ministers. A multiple ministry would have been weak; the Governor and the bureaucracy would have outridden the ministerial power and the national will as expressed by the legislature would have been circumscribed. Further, such ministries would have frustrated the national unity which the Congress represented. The communal groups would have permanently become component parts of the administration just as the British had made them in the legislatures, destroying every chance of effective executive government. If the Congress had agreed to set up multiple ministries the anomalous result would have been that while insisting on Indian nationalism it would have perpetuated a multiplicity of communal claims, its representatives thus destroying the very object of their existence. The only alternative left was to associate with the ministry Muslim members who believed in national unity and the will to national freedom and who did not insist on the division of administration on racial and communal grounds. In Bombay several Muslim independent members were ready and willing, nay, anxious to be members of the Congress ministry. It was impossible to placate all

and when they were not placated they straightway went and joined the Muslim League party. The Muslim League party in the legislatures was not the result of elections but of frustrated individual ambition.

Prof. Coupland in his book reads in the Muslim mass contact movement of the Congress a desire to submerge the Muslims. In its true perspective the movement was the natural outcome of the Congress policy to bring about Hindu-Muslim settlement within its fold and facing the foreigner as a united nation. If the learned Professor had been an unbiassed critic he would never have regarded the Congress call to the Muslims for co-operation and understanding so necessary in its gigantic fight against the foreign rule, as an attempt to submerge the minority.

Through the years 1937 to 1938 and part of 1939 Lord Linlithgow was as anxious to prevent the separatist tendency of the Muslim League as was the Congress. As a matter of fact he insisted on the introduction of the federal part of the Constitution Act of 1935 in order that the League may not be able to drive the Muslim masses on the dangerous pathway of disruption.

The fact was that the British statesmen themselves wanted to introduce the federal part of the Constitution as early as possible, and right till 1939 looked forward to Congress co-operation in that objective. They did not favour coalition ministries till then. When the Pirpur Report regarding the so-called atrocities of the Congress ministries was significantly prepared

just about the time that the Congress ministries resigned, at least three Governors including the U. P. Governor vouched for the fairness of Congress policy and denied in unambiguous language the reckless charges trotted out in the Report.

If war had not forced the ministries out of office in 1939 and if they had gone to the polls next year Hindus and Muslims would have combined to return overwhelmingly national legislatures. It was only after the Congress left the Ministries, that in order to counter American propaganda in favour of Indian freedom, communal agreement was made by the British as the condition precedent to any political progress in India. Muslim League, in consequence, came to be invested by the British with a veto on Indian freedom and became intransigent. The official agency thereafter began to lay the blame of such intransigence at the doors of the Congress as purely a world propaganda against the Congress.

And secure in the consciousness that the British will not part with power, the League has continued in its attitude of rejecting all proposals while failing to define its own.

## V

### PROF. COUPLAND'S MAJOR FALLACY

#### *First Stage ; India Enslaved.*

There is a major fallacy which throughout the three volumes of his Report vitiates Prof. Coupland's logic and diagnosis.

The assumption throughout has been that during the last 125 years Englishmen never supposed that India's subjection was a permanent dispensation.<sup>1</sup> The author starts by quoting Hastings (1818) that "the time not very remote will arrive when England will, on the same principles and policy, wish to relinquish the domination of India." He ends by assuring himself and those who agree with him that "the cardinal principle of British policy, *viz.*, that Britain is ready to make full and final transfer of power into Indian hands"<sup>2</sup> stands unchanged. What was "not a very remote time" in 1818 has come, in 1944, were it not, according to Prof. Coupland, rendered endless by Hindu-Muslim antagonism.

"Grow up, my boy," says the Indian adage, "and I shall get you a wife." This was the policy in 1818. It is the policy on which this Report is based. But everyone in India outside the small section who live on British patronage, and every freedom-loving observer outside India, knows that Britain had no intention to part with power; that it has none today; and that the mastery of modern power politics has enabled her to create conditions in which it is impossible to enforce the fulfilment of the intention, if any high-minded Britisher entertained it. The assumption may now be historically examined.

When the British power emerged on the Indian scene, India had had a continuity of tra-

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<sup>1</sup> *Coupland*, I, 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, III, 10.

ditions and institutions welding her life into a great harmony. In every sphere except in the art of war she had been on a level with; if not in advance of, the most civilised countries of the world. The imperial tradition in India which was enshrined in song, myth and tradition representing the greatness and unity of the country, had curiously come to surround the Empire of the Moghuls who had thrown in their lot with the people and drawn the support of Hindus and Muslims alike. Emperor Akbar, the greatest of them, was a national tradition. The Mahrattas had established imperial sway over large parts of the country. Racial unity between Hindus and Muslims, coupled with social and cultural contacts created during the preceding four centuries, had led to an adjustment. For several centuries there had been no line of hostility drawn between Hindu powers on one side and Muslim powers on the other in the country. In spite of social and religious differences Hindus and Muslims never dreamt that they were two nations, or that India was not their common Motherland.

In 1857, Hindus and Muslims combined in the name of the Moghul emperor to drive out the British from the common Motherland. What is called, from a British point of view, the Indian Mutiny has been described not quite inaccurately as the War of Indian Independence. It was "a war fought over so vast a territory and by an alliance which included more diverse forces than had ever united in India against any

conqueror from outside.”<sup>3</sup> In order to crush this resurgent India, Britain had ‘to turn different sections of the Indian people against one another by encouraging group and provincial enmities.’<sup>4</sup> The ancient hostility of the Sikhs against the Muslims was exploited to destroy the Muslim army.

India lost its independence. Britain, with complete thoroughness, wiped out the old India. The national focus which the Moghul tradition had created was destroyed. The homogeneity of the Indian Army was disrupted. By discriminatory recruitment a new army based on communal, tribal, caste and provincial distinctions was brought into existence. Hostile groups were counterpoised against each other in its formation. “Dangerous” districts and intellectual classes were excluded. Indians were barred from higher posts altogether. Pathans and Punjabis who were less than 10 per cent of the army in 1856 formed 47 per cent in 1858 and 58·5 per cent in 1930. Recruits from North-East India, U. P. and Bihar fell from 90 per cent in 1856 to 47 per cent in 1858 and 11 per cent in 1930.<sup>5</sup> Dalhousie’s policy of doing away with the old decrepit Indian States was reversed. The object of keeping them alive was thus stated by Lord Canning in 1860:

“It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillas (British

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<sup>3</sup>Edward Thompson, *History of India* 70.

<sup>4</sup>Sir John Seely, *Expansion of England*, 270.

<sup>5</sup>Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan*, 70.

Districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States *without political power, but as royal instruments* (italics mine) we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt; and the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever."

The "Allies" of His Majesty came to be subjected to the arbitrary rule of the political Department of the Government of India, that is by a British Secretary of one of the most confidential departments. The Viceroy was there to remind them that 'Paramountcy must remain paramount.' Prof. Rushbrook Williams more than fifty years later reconfirmed this view. "The situation of these feudatory (Indian) States, checkerboarding all India as they do, is a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory."

The old autocracies in the British-acquired territory were replaced by a British governing corporation invested with the most far-reaching autocratic powers. Each province had a British Governor; each district had its ruling chief in a British Revenue Collector who held court with the British District Judge and British Superintendent of Police as the replicas of the old ministers of Justice and War. Even in the days of the Turkish and Afghan inroads, the foreign ruling chief had to make peace



with the local magnates. After 1857 the complete disarmament of the people made the White autocrats the unquestioned masters of the country. The local magnates disappeared as centres of power unless they were prepared to shine in the glory of borrowed light by playing flunkies to the British autocrats.

Historic continuity was snapped not only in matters of political structure but even in other spheres of life. The aristocrats of North India, Hindu and Muslim, were destroyed. Their traditional career of arms was closed to them. Middle class Hindus were attracted to the new regime by low paid jobs in government services. The glorious memories of a past greatness were meticulously wiped out. The vestiges of Moghul rule were removed. Poona, the second Imperial Capital in the country, became an annexe to the British Governor's monsoon capital at Ganeshkind and the British military camp at Kirkee. The Khalsa was left without a guru to maintain the patriotic traditions of Guru Govind Singh. English, a foreign tongue, was made the only passport to position, thus depriving Indians of the pride and heritage which their indigenous literatures gave them. Universities became breeding grounds for useful adjuncts to the British rule. Pride in the past became a thing of shame. The dignity and sense of one's cultural heritage was forgotten.

Social and political life was so carefully deranged that a new and helpless India came

into existence. No national focus was left to attract the political ambitions of the people. The old values were transformed. One of the proudest peoples on earth began to look upon themselves as uncivilised, and the hated East India Company emerged as the 'benign' British Government.

Thus did the British accomplish the enslavement of the country and the corruption of her soul.

## VI

### HINDU-MUSLIM ANTAGONISM (1857-1909)

If the old bulwarks of national strength had been destroyed, the national consciousness and will were forming new centres within the stifling structure which the British were building. Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) under British encouragement developed the new outlook that British rule was a divine dispensation. He founded the first religious movement, the first political lead, and the first Press in India. He was recognised as a safe pro-British Indian who could destroy the influence of the fiery warlords of 1857, who were eating their hearts out in angry despair. On the other hand, during the Great Revolt a Sanyasi, Dayanand Saraswati, from Gujerat, furious at his country's helplessness, was devising ways and means to restore strength and dignity to his

country "undermining the belief in the superiority of the White races."<sup>1</sup>

Frightened at the outburst of hostile feelings in India, mid-Victorian Liberalism framed the Queen's Proclamation of 1857 as a tempting bait of equality to the Indian elements willing to be reconciled. But soon, all means were taken to 'break to the heart the promises they had uttered to the ear.'<sup>2</sup> Even Indians trying to enter the I.C.S. were tricked out of it by childish excuses or impossible age limits.<sup>3</sup> The oriental title of Kaiser-i-Hind was assumed to impose a badge of servitude and was considered 'a national humiliation' by India.<sup>4</sup> At the end of Lytton's regime in 1885 the country bordered on a revolution.

Lord Ripon, a transparently honest man, was sent to placate her. He tried to translate the broad spirit of the Proclamation into action. But his efforts were defied by Britishers in India, and decried by them in Britain. The Ilbert Bill had to be withdrawn as a result of Anglo-Indian agitation which wanted to preserve their race superiority. The noblest of Britishers who ever came to India thereupon resigned and left the country a 'defeated, if not a disappointed man.'<sup>5</sup>

In spite of these blows, the national genius

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<sup>1</sup>Besant, *Case for India*, 27.

<sup>2</sup>Viceroy Lytton's confidential despatch.

<sup>3</sup>Banerjea, *A Nation in the Making*, 1827, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Pradhan, *India's Struggle for Swaraj*, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Blunt, *India Under Ripon in 1909*, p. 312.

was recovering consciousness. In 1875 Daya-nand founded the Arya Samaj; in 1883 Banerjea convened a national conference, and Hume appealed for an association for the political organisation of India.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded by leading Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Europeans, all acting as nationalists on a politico-economic platform. It began humbly, protesting loyalty and seeking only higher posts or redress of administrative grievances; for, its leaders were devout believers in the democratic liberalism of the Victorian era, and like Ram Mohun Roy considered India's association with Britain a "divine dispensation."

The Congress at once became the focus, embodiment and instrument of the nationalism of the English educated in the land, through which the old harmony expressed itself. Within three years of its birth the British threw their weight against it and played 'the great body of Conservative opinion'<sup>6</sup> against it. A so-called anti-Congress party was brought into existence by the Anglo-Indian party, and Sir Saiyad Ahmed was mobilised to speak against the Muslim leadership of the Congress which then was represented by Tayabji and Sayani.<sup>7</sup>

As early as the eighties, clear-headed

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 229.

<sup>7</sup>Hume, quoted by Sir Auckland Colvin in *Audt Alteram Paxtem*.

British thinkers could find in the communal divisions of the country an advantage for perpetuating their domination of the country. Long before the policy of the protection of minorities became fashionable with the Britishers, Seely said the truth plainly that the 'existence side by side of these hostile creeds is one of the strong points in our political position in India.'

Religious neutrality which the British insisted on upholding was not a selfless principle. In the name of impartiality it enabled the British to maintain every religious barrier intact, uphold each community's 'right' against the other, and thwart the adjustment of religious differences. As a result of this policy, existing divisions were accentuated, and the natural process of unification was retarded by the fact that every rival creed and sect was encouraged to advance its special claims.

In 1880 Chiplunkar with his lieutenant Tilak, later Lokamanya, brought into existence a movement inspired by the pre-British tradition, which was intensely national in spirit and sought for strength among the masses. In 1897 Tilak, the first of political martyrs of modern India, was convicted of 'sedition'—'of charges of which not one of his fellow countrymen believed him to be guilty.'<sup>8</sup> This word 'sedition' was a word of comprehensive import which covered the smallest desire for national

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<sup>8</sup>L. Ghose, *Presidential Address*, 1903.

freedom and the cheapest sneer against a White officer.

From 1885 to 1905 the British Governors-General spurned every appeal of the Congress and tried to crush the national movement. In 1904 Lord Curzon, determined to keep India as the 'jewel' of the British Empire, started not only repression but administrative reforms calculated to destroy the political life of the country. Bengal, united by ties of history, language and culture was vivisected by him, ostensibly to favour the Muslims but really to "enfeeble the growing power and to destroy the political tendencies of a patriotic spirit."<sup>9</sup> Muslims were made a tool for imperial ends in order to "check the growing strength of the Hindu community,"<sup>10</sup> only to be let down later when the partition was annulled as a result of subsequent change in policy.

The militant national consciousness which the Partition of Bengal had generated was also intensified by Japan's victory over Russia in which the Indian people saw the symbol of Asia's emancipation from the thralldom of Europe. Political changes known as Minto-Morley Reforms were brought in as a sop to the moderates. Legislative Councils established under it, were not intended to bring in parliamentary government as Viceroy Minto himself hastened to emphasise. Though they were merely consultatives, special care was taken

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<sup>9</sup>Sir Henry Cotton, *India in Transition*.

<sup>10</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta.

to see that class was set against class, community against community, each to cancel out the effect of the other. Zamindars and commercial classes were given disproportionate representation at the expense of the politically minded classes, "substituting those who cannot criticise for those who can,"<sup>11</sup> even going to the extent of creating special interests before such interests were organised or articulate.<sup>12</sup> Morley the Secretary of State, himself a radical in Britain, proved worse than a Tory so far as India was concerned.

Again, for counterpoising the Muslim community against the Hindu, Viceroy Lord Minto stage-managed a Muslim deputation under the leadership of H. H. The Aga Khan and "first started the Muslim hare" as Morley admitted. The deputation was assured that Government was convinced that personal enfranchisement, as distinguished from communal, would be a "mischievous failure." The rising democracy having been back-stabbed, Minto promised separate electorates to the Muslims, in the proposed reforms. A religious minority, at the behest of the British authorities, was accorded a political existence as a makeweight against the growing nationalism in the country, while the Councils, established under the Minto-Morley Reforms, of course remained "gilded shams" with "magnified nonentities whose constituency was the Government House."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta.

<sup>12</sup>A. Mehta and A. Patwardhan, *Communal Triangle* p. 65.

<sup>13</sup>Sir C. Y. Chintamani.

The Muslim community was considered the "favourite wife," to use, the words of a Lt.-Governor of Assam. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, before he became Premier, confessed: "The Mohammedan leaders are inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials and these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and Mohammedan communities by showing the Muslims special favours."<sup>14</sup> Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State, attested that 'the predominant bias in British officialdom in India in favour of the Muslims was largely a makeweight against Hindu Nationalism.'

Thus, by 1906, the educated Hindus, Muslims and Parsis in the Congress had formed a national focus. The Partition movement had shown their effective solidarity. Their potentiality as the nucleus of an India as 'an indivisible and impenetrable monad' was great. Had they been allowed to gather strength, the nationalists would have co-operated with Britain to evolve by slow stages a dominion government. But the Britishers played power politics. By giving separate electorates to the Muslims, which the Nationalist Muslims, did not want, they achieved several results:

First, they segregated a part of the people into a separate entity, imposing a barrier to healthy national evolution.

Secondly, by making communal and religious exclusiveness the basis of division,

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<sup>14</sup> *Awakening of India* 176



they brought up centrifugal passions from the lower strata of Muslim life to the surface, and effectively disturbed the harmony of national outlook which prevailed among the progressive national-minded leaders of all communities.

Thirdly, they reduced the advanced Nationalist Muslims to the position of individuals unrepresentative of Muslim opinion.

Fourthly, by mobilising communal passions among the Muslims, they gave scope, by way of antithesis to similar passions among Hindus coming to the surface.

Thus was India pushed by British power-politics down into the valley of communal antagonism.

## VII

### HOW BRITAIN DENIED FREEDOM (1909-1937)

In his admiration of the British generosity towards India, Professor Coupland has forgotten the war which Britain carried on from 1909 to 1936 against Indian aspirations towards freedom. No sooner the Minto-Morley Reforms were given in 1909, Britain, in the name of sedition, inaugurated a campaign of suppressing all thought and expression which savoured of freedom.

In spite of all the dissatisfaction prevailing in the country, however, the war of 1914 saw India on the side of Britain. The extent

of India's contribution to it was out of all proportion to what one could expect from such a poor and discontented country. About 1,400,000 Indian troops were despatched to European and Middle East battle-fields, that is, 178,000 more than all the troops contributed by the combined Dominions of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Britain, who had borne practically no share of the cost of the frequent military expeditions forced upon India by considerations of imperial interests hitherto, was now helped by India to an extent unimaginable.

India's contribution during that war in military expenditure alone amounted to Rs. 62·5 crores, while the total money contribution, which included also the increase in civil and political charges, amounted to Rs. 87½ crores. In addition the war cost the country a fresh contribution of Rs. 70 crores decided upon at the end of the war and an annual burden by way of interest alone of Rs. 10 crores. This leaves out of account the large contributions to Britain's heavy financial outlays, and investments in British securities which necessarily involved starvation of Indian industries and restriction of Indian trade.<sup>2</sup> All this contribution was from a country whose annual per capital income is estimated at about Rs. 65! The late Lord Hardinge, ex-Viceroy, rightly said that India was "bled white."

The Indian Princes, too—may be, in return

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. K. Shridharani in *War Without Violence*

<sup>2</sup>Prof. K. T. Shah in *60 Years of Indian Finance*

for favours rendered or anticipated—rallied round the Government. Some of them served personally on the staff while all of them “lavished the blood and treasure of their subjects.”<sup>3</sup> to be rewarded later on by titles and honours, by robes and swords of honour, guns, revolvers, complimentary *sanads* inscribed with the name and services of the recipient, by cash rewards, and grants of government land.<sup>4</sup>

This ungrudging co-operation with and support of the war effort was rendered possible mainly because India,—even the politically conscious section of it—believed in the righteousness of British cause in the War. The Congress in 1915 at Bombay “recorded (its) abiding sense in the righteousness of the cause espoused by Great Britain and her allies.”<sup>5</sup> The faith in British justice that was always foremost in the minds of Indian leaders for the moment displaced the suspicion that had been roused by recent actions. India actively took part in the war; its leaders felt it was India’s duty and interest to do so. Mahatma Gandhi himself, who had recently returned from South Africa, with his faith in the British yet unshaken, went about recruiting men for the Army.

Mr. Lloyd George, the then Premier of Britain, gave public recognition to India’s important contribution to the war when he

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<sup>3</sup> Al Carthill in *Last Dominion*

<sup>4</sup> Sir Michael O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*

<sup>5</sup> *History of the Congress* Dr. P. Sitaramayya, 207

said : "As to India, by her remarkable contribution to our triumph, notably in the East, she had won a new claim so irresistible that it ought to overpower and must overpower all the prejudice and timidity which might stand in the way of her progress."<sup>6</sup>

The reward, however, came in the "legislative and administrative repression, deprivation of freedom of speech, freedom of the person, confiscation of property, suppression of newspapers, execution, flogging . . . which was Prussianism in excelsis";<sup>7</sup> in the same Mr. Lloyd George's refusal in 1920 to redeem the pledge he had given in 1918 January for favourable treatment of Turkey in order to placate Indian Muslim sentiment; in the massacre of innocents at Jallianwallabagh; in the "crawling order"; and in the insult added to injury when the "heroes" like General Dyer who maintained White prestige at the cost of Indian ladies at Jallianwallabagh were publicly honoured in England.

In 1917, compelled by the necessity of placating the democratic spirit of the United States of America, whose armies Britain wanted badly on the battle-fields of Europe, Mr. Edwin Montague,—after Ripon India's best British friend—then Secretary of State for India declared Britain's policy to be "the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 301

<sup>7</sup>Sir Valentine Chirol

Empire.” But when the policy was translated into the Montague Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, Britain could give India nothing more than a shadow of responsibility. The Reforms, in essence, were such that Mrs. Besant, the great English woman who then led the Indian Home Rule Movement, referred to them as “unworthy of England to offer and of India to accept.” But this was not enough. Britain went ahead with measures suppressing even the existing liberties, with “promiscuous floggings and whippings, indiscriminate arrests and confiscations, the so-called ‘fancy punishments’, designed not so much to punish individual ‘rebels’ as to terrorise and humiliate.”<sup>8</sup>

Political frustration led to seething discontent in India against British rule. Belief in British fairplay disappeared. Gandhiji’s description of the Government as “Satanic” found echo in all hearts. It was in those dark days that he assumed the leadership of the country. He inaugurated a mass movement of non-violent non-co-operation which gave a militant edge to Nationalism. By virtue of his hold over the masses, however, he could round off the mass upheaval, which otherwise would have led to unprecedented outburst of violence.

The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms came into force in 1919. They involved no real transfer of political power. Indians were asked to play the rulers’ game; the actual work of ruling was left in the safe hands of the British

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in *Communal Triangle*, 70

officials who were in charge of the Reserved Departments as against the Transferred Departments given to Indians. Exposing, perhaps quite unintentionally in a moment of agony, the hollowness of this 'transfer' of a few departments to Indians, the late Sir K. V. Reddy, one of the Indian ministers under the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms—not a Congress politician by any means—frankly confessed: "I am minister of Development minus forest; minister of industries without electricity, which is a reserved subject; minister of agriculture without irrigation."<sup>9</sup> Late Sir C. Y. Chintamani, the veteran Liberal statesman, said: "Diarchy succeeded only so long as it was ignored in practice."

In 1921 and 1922, after having conceded this insignificant measure of constitutional progress, the British authorities again started a fresh campaign of persecution. Gandhiji was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. All popular movements were suppressed.

In 1926, when the Swarajist Party in the Central Legislative Assembly—led by Pandit Motilal Nehru—got passed a resolution proposing a Round Table Conference to revise India's constitution, the Viceroy turned down the recommendation. But the British authorities did it—five years after, though only as a make-believe. The Simon Commission was announced, consisting only of "God's own Englishmen" for examining India's fitness for fur-

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<sup>9</sup> *Indian Constitutional History*

ther instalments of constitutional progress. The insult implied in the Commission's scope and composition was so well understood by the whole Nation that when it came it saw only black flags and 'Simon Go Back' wherever it went. Only some unrepresentative persons—mostly reactionaries—could be got to co-operate with it. When the Commission made its report there was no mention whatever in it of Dominion Status for India. It naturally decided against Indian fitness for any share of real responsibility in the government of their country. It could only think of granting some concessions to satisfy the 'legitimate' aspirations of the reactionaries who co-operated with them.

With the formation of the second Labour Government in Britain, Lord Irwin (now Lord Halifax) the Viceroy amplified Montague's 1917 Announcement into a presentable formula. The report of the Simon Commission was hastily shelved in Britain ; in India 'it found its place on the scrap heap,' as Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar, the great Liberal leader, once remarked. In 1928 the All-Parties Conference formulated a scheme of self-government known as The Nehru Report. But that scheme was rejected off hand by Britain. At the end of 1928, the Congress gave to British government one year's time to accept it, and when that term expired at the end of 1929 the Congress accepted 'Complete Independence' as its goal.

This goal of Independence has been criticised by British spokesmen as an impossible slogan, though Gandhiji once defined it as

meaning the 'substance of independence.' But even after twelve years of Montague's declaration, not even responsible government in the Provinces had been offered.

In the beginning of 1930, the Nation was seething with discontent when Gandhiji harnessed it to the Civil Disobedience movement. Repression, as usual, was started by the British authorities in India. But the international fortunes of England were running low and she wanted to tide over the difficulties in India. Early in 1931, Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders were released and the British government signed with Gandhiji the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. On the basis of the declaration made by the British Premier, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, regarding the scope of the Round Table Conference, the Congress was invited to attend the Second Round Table Conference. When Gandhiji, as the sole representative of the Nation, attended the Round Table Conference in London, a whole array of princes communalists and representatives of interests created or supported for imperialistic purposes stood against him clamouring for their own order or class. By the end of 1931 the Conference ended; Gandhiji returned empty handed; and the Gandhi-Irwin truce was torn up by the British. The mailed fist was again brought into play. The so-called 'dual policy' was put into force by the British authorities in India. Its object was to crush the Congress and to give India such reforms as Britain thought fit in her own interest.



With nationalism locked up behind prison bars, Britain gave another heavy blow to Indian nationalism in the shape of Premier Macdonald's Communal Award—which later came to be known, and more aptly, as the 'Communal Reward.' Separate electorates had led to the effective political segregation of the Muslim community, and thrown up leaders whose outlook was more communal than national. To gain political advantages for their community at the cost of Nationalism was their confessed aim. Mr. Jinnah, who till then was a nationalist leader associated with the Congress, put himself at their head.

Encouraged by British statesmen, the Muslims put forward demands which had the effect of converting the Muslims—a religious minority up to 1909 and a political minority since then—into a separate constituent 'unit of the Indian people. They demanded a majority in certain provinces by either creating new boundaries or reserving statutory majority for themselves as a counterpoise to the provinces with a Hindu majority. Mr. Jinnah had asked for these conditions on a promise of agreeing to joint electorates with reserved seats for Hindus and Muslims. Joint electorates at least have had the advantage of eliminating the political bitterness which was growing on account of the separate electorates. But the British premier went on better. He, in his award, conceded the demands of the Muslims but declined to give the quid pro quo to nationalist India in the shape of joint electorates. The Muslim community was sud-

denly converted into a separate, distinct element of the body politic. The germ of civil war was thus laid by the British Premier, so that when the time came it could be exploited for the benefit of British imperialism.

The three Round Table Conferences brought forth the Act of 1935. Passed through parliament when Nationalism was being hunted down in India, it reflected the least common measure of agreement among three interests : First, British imperialism ; Secondly, the Indian Princes who, as against the people of British India, were discovered to possess sovereign rights which they did not and could not claim against Britain ; and Thirdly, hand-picked 'representatives' from British India who were left after Gandhiji left London and was arrested. Out of the last group the very few liberal politicians, led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had associated themselves with the last stage of the Conferences, disclaimed sympathy with the new proposals.

The new Constitution Act granted provincial autonomy hedged in with a multiplicity of safeguards and special powers which Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State, described as just 'sign posts' but which, in substance were impediments to democratic advance scattered over every vantage point. A constitutional authority of the weight and eminence, of Sir Arthur B. Keith said : "With the safeguarding of minorities the essence of responsible government is seriously if not fatally compromised. If the governors of the provinces were seriously to act

on their special responsibilities it is certain that responsible government would never emerge."<sup>10</sup>

If the provincial part of the Act was a farce, the Federal part was little short of a fraud. "It was a device," says Sir A. B. Keith, "that was favoured by the British in order to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India."<sup>11</sup> Deprived of control over external affairs and defence, the alleged concession of responsibility was "all but meaningless." The Viceroy was the Grand Moghul, armed with discretionary powers and backed by the "loyal" elements of British India and the Indian Princes.

On the other hand the British expected (1) that the constitution would be an effective bulwark against any attempt to secure transfer of power to Indian hands ; and (2) that the legislatures will never achieve a team spirit which would disturb the Viceroy and the Governors in the enjoyment of unfettered discretionary powers.

This much abused—and often rightly abused Act had, however, three merits.

First, it was based on the conception of Indian unity.

Secondly, it brought in the Indian Princes into a federation with the democratic provinces.

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<sup>10</sup>, <sup>11</sup> *Indian Constitutional History*

Thirdly, in British India the franchise was sufficiently broadbased to foster a spirit of democracy.

## VIII

### HOW GANDHIJI'S WAR AID WAS SPURNED (1937-39)

Prof. Coupland's assumption that at one time the British were willing to part with power in the Centre is again belied by the facts which happened between 1937-39.

In 1937 the Congress had captured 711 seats out of a total of 1585, in all the provincial lower houses, had an overwhelming majority in five provinces, and a working majority in three. The Muslim League had 108 seats out of 485 reserved Muslim seats and a majority in no province. For the first time in the British period an all-India constitution had an All-India steel frame of elected national delegates.

The British were non-plussed. The Congress itself was surprised at its strength. By temperament and technique it had been a fighting machine. Having hitched its waggon to the star of Independence, it had spurned the lowly act of wielding administrative power to gather greater power. Its cementing force was based on the psychology created by a will to national freedom ; its strength, on its loyalty to Gandhiji and his indispensability.

As a mass organisation it was only concerned with mass action ; its members on the whole were simply unaware of the vast potentiality that lay hidden in the Constitution Act of 1935. To them it was a 'fraudulent device' of the British, and so was 'untouchable.' The British, on the other hand, were confident of the Constitution being freedom-proof, and were prepared to rope in the Congress in the hope of diverting its revolutionary energy into constitutional channels. The experiment had succeeded in other parts of the Empire ; and it was, they thought, bound to succeed in India.

A choice lay before the Congress : either to reject office and get the constitution suspended straightaway, or take office, generate power, and step into the Federation as its most powerful element. Leading Congressmen naturally fell into two sections. Gandhiji thereupon as usual evolved a formula which allowed every section to feel that its objective would be achieved. Offices must be accepted in the provinces, with a view to break the Constitution. The British, however, held that once the Congress tasted the reality of power will forsake the revolutionary path and help to build a contented and federated India within the British Commonwealth.

In spite of his later policies, which brought him into discredit, the credit for the new policy must go to Lord Linlithgow and his Governors, notably the Governors of Bombay and Madras. They entered into a gentleman's agreement not

to exercise their discretionary powers under the Act. They allowed a free hand to the ministries within the ambit of provincial power. They helped ; they rarely hindered.

But soon the conflict of objectives between the Congress and the British led to a rift between them. To the bulk of Congressmen provincial power was an instrument for some day breaking the Centre. To the British statesmen, it was a step by which the Congress could come in to work the federal part of the Constitution. Among Congressmen those who believed that the provincial power under the constitution if properly utilised could lead India to the control of the federal part and as a next step to 'substance of independence', were a mere handful.

A diagnosis of the present situation is not possible without an appraisal of the situation in 1939.

1. Lord Linlithgow was very anxious that the Congress should help to bring in the Federal part of the Act. He warned us that if it was not allowed to come India would be disrupted in the name of Pakistan.

2. He was equally keen on bringing up the administration in the States to a fair standard of efficiency and responsibility in spite of the opposition of his Political Department.

3. He was convinced that now that the Congress had come in to work the Constitution, Britain and the Congress would continue to

remain friends sufficiently long to usher in a new era. To use his own words :

“Section 93 is a nightmare. You cannot get away from me, and I cannot get away from you. The circumstances daily arising in India and the world renders that impossible.”\*

The Right wing of the Congress High Command—to use a convenient phrase without implying any suggestion of merit or demerit—was fully aware of the power it had acquired under the Constitution. It wanted to use this power, as fast as it could be, for securing India's freedom by the combined pressure of public opinion from without and of ministries from within.

The Left wing was distinctly unhappy. In the close co-operation of the ministries with the Provincial Governors it saw a truck with British Imperialism, and a weakening of the Congress resolve to break the Constitution. The advantage of securing a foothold in an All-India Centre had no appeal for it.

Two facts, however, remained unappreciated by those who directed the vast machinery which governed three-fourths of India.

First, the unity of any country, much more so of India with its chequered past, must be sustained by a central political structure which disciplined the diverse centrifugal elements by steady governmental pressure.

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\*Quoted from my notes of a conversation early in 1939.

Secondly, the slogan that Hindu-Muslim disunity was the creation of British Imperialism blurred a clear perception of the fact that Hindu-Muslim antagonism had its historical roots; that they can only be removed by the habit of settling differences by persuasion; and that such a habit cannot be acquired by masses except by the coercive influences of a government.

Born as a popular movement, rendered effective by the mass resistance taught by Gandhiji, Nationalism in India was apt to forget the necessity of wielding limited power before it can gather irresistible national strength.

On the other hand, the British statesmen forgot the fact that their alliance with Nationalism must, in order to be cemented, lead to an early transfer of some power at the Centre. They were on the contrary determined not to part with power at the Centre, and were restive at the Congress attempts to force the pace.

The inherent weakness of the situation lay in the Nationalists' impatience for a share at the Centre and the British determination not to give it. Both parties for the moment, however, were of the view that if the Constitution continued to be worked, Hindu-Muslim antagonism would be adjusted by being made to flow into channels of mutual adjustment.

The war suddenly came in September 1939, and a crisis was precipitated. Britain did not want to break with the Congress if the



Centre was safe. The Congress could not stay in office unless a share at the Centre was given. Conflict of objectives at once came to a head. Once Emergency was declared under the Government of India Act, and the Defence of India Ordinance, later the Act, came into force, the popular provincial governments became mere blind agents for carrying out the policies and programme of an irresponsible Centre. An elected Home Minister, in matters of Law and Order, for instance, would be a nobody when his subordinate Police Commissioner as an agent of the Centre acted under the D. I. Act. Unless, therefore, a share at the Centre was obtained, the Congress would become in the people's eye only a foreign agent.

At the instance of highly placed authorities terms were secured from Gandhiji in September 1939. It was a splendid offer of friendship and readiness to co-operate in the war effort. I publish it now to vindicate the position which Gandhiji took at the beginning of the war.

Gandhiji sent the message :

1. I know that my views in regard to unconditional co-operation are not shared by the country. The resolution of the Working Committee reflects the Congress opinion properly.
2. Since the Congress is unable, owing to past experiences, to give unconditional co-operation, it can only co-

operate if it is able to convince the country that it has in substance achieved its purpose and that therefore there is a complete understanding about it between the British Government and the Congress.

3. If there is a real understanding between the British Government and the Congress it follows that there must be corresponding action even during the war. Thus Ministries must not be mere registering agencies of the measures coming from the Centre. Hence there must be some method at the Centre for having a Congress representation sufficient to give it a majority.
4. The only constitutional way in which the Ministries can declare their position is to obtain the necessary authority of their respective legislatures by getting them to adopt this resolution, unless in the meantime they can convince their legislatures that circumstances in terms of 2 and 3 have come into existence which renders such resolution unnecessary.
5. If the British Government are serious in their professions that they are fighting for democracy, they cannot marshall the moral opinion of the world in their favour except by declaring that India will be a free and

democratic country at the end of the war and that in the meantime it has taken steps to implement the assurance so far as it is practicable under martial conditions.

6. If for some reason the British Government takes a different view the Ministries will find it impossible to function.
7. The resolution may be kept back for a week if the members of the War Sub-Committee agree. But it must be clearly understood that before the A.I.C.C. meets the Working Committee, which meets on the 4th, must have definite material to give the lead to the A.I.C.C. and the country.

The offer was rejected.

It would have been possible for the Congress to remain in office and associate themselves with the War. It would then have been an indispensable and extra-constitutional ally of the Centre. It would have had the organisation of the country and its resources in its hands. Out of this position, power at the Centre would have necessarily followed. India's integrity and position, power and status would have all been secured during the War. But the rejection of Gandhiji's offer, though known to few, made it clear that the British statesmen were not prepared just then to allow Congressmen to touch the Centre, even under the existing constitution.

The crisis had made the British panicky, the Congress impatient. Indo-British distrust, the legacy of history, reared its ugly head; the time for decision was too short for overcoming it. British civilians wanted no co-operation. The bulk of Congressmen shied at co-operation. The resignations of the Congress ministries were therefore accepted.

Britain and India thus moved towards the appointed catastrophe, as in a Greek tragedy.

## IX

### HOW BRITAIN FRUSTRATED THE NATION AND REARED A FRAN- KENSTEIN (1939-44)

When the Congress ministries resigned in November 1939, Britain was staggered. The alliance of the Congress, which the British Government regarded as more or less of a permanent nature, was broken. Britain suddenly found the Congress hostile at the moment when the European war imposed upon her the supreme need for inter-imperial solidarity. But the Congress had alienated the Indian States by the Rajkot debacle. It had also antagonised the Hindu Mahasabha by its appeasement of Muslims and the Muslim League by its national character. Britain therefore naturally decided to make up with the enemies of the Nation.

The Congress being pledged to an anti-imperialist policy, found in its pledges an

insuperable obstacle to associating with a Government which denied India honourable partnership in the War. But the Congress was in unexpected difficulties. No politically-minded Indian had any faith left in the British promises. Gandhiji with his uncanny power of producing formulas which would keep differing sections of his followers together produced the new formula of non-co-operation with the war effort. Congressmen saw in it the wished for programme. The non-Gandhians found in it an anti-imperialist front; the Gandhians, the long cherished pacifist challenge to war. This non-co-operative attitude of the Congress imposed upon Congressmen the urgent need for developing some kind of mass resistance so as to escape disintegration. At the same time the life and death struggle through which Britain was passing made it impossible for her to deal with this internal menace with kid gloves.

The Congress policy fluctuated between pacifism and the desire to participate in the War on honourable terms. On the 6th of July Gandhiji as the apostle of Non-violence announced that "if the Congress sticks to its policies it is sure to find its way to its goal even before the war is over provided the war is purely, truly and demonstrably non-violent." But on the 28th July the A.I.C.C. assembled at Poona declared in favour of non-violent defence against external aggression or internal disorder. The demand for a share at the Centre to fight the war was made by the Work-

ing Committee and emphatically turned down by the British Government. At the last interview which I had with Lord Linlithgow in August that year, I found that the Viceroy had lost all confidence in the Congress High Command. He felt that it was dominated by elements which were either anti-British or pacifist. He was bitter; distrustful both of the Congress and the League, of every Hindu and Muslim. He evidently had come to believe that Indians of any political or religious colour who had any following in the country would not be permitted to stand true to Britain if there was a crisis in the war situation.

It was wrong to blame Indians for this attitude. Nobody in India loved Britain; she had broken too many promises to merit confidence.

Mr. Jinnah clearly perceived the opening which had been made for him as a result of British difficulties and Congress vacillation. He insisted upon a categorical assurance from the British Government that it would not adopt any constitution without the previous approval of Muslim India and that Muslim Indian leadership must have an equal share in the authority and control of the governments, central and provincial.

In America, the British Government found itself in an unexpected situation. The reputation of Gandhiji and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stood high with the American public. Unless it was destroyed the Isolationist opinion

could not be won. Britain therefore set about achieving one end *viz.* not to share power at the Centre with Indians at any cost and at the same time to convince the American public that Britain was anxious to give self-government to India, were it possible.

The "August Offer" was expected to achieve these ends. First, the Viceregal autocracy was to be provided an Indian facade by the expansion of the Governor-General's Council.

Secondly, the refusal to transfer any responsibility to Indian hands was to be attributed to the disagreement between the Congress and the Muslim League.

Lastly, agreement was to be rendered impossible by every element in the country which opposed any demand for political progress, being given a veto.

A promise, however, was made to allow Indians, subject to the usual paramount claims of British policies to frame a new Constitution after the war.

In effect the August Offer was a definite and absolute refusal on the part of Britain to share power at the Centre during the period of the War, and a plain hint that even after the war Britain would continue to play the usual device of giving liberty to differing elements in the country to remove their dissensions after she had successfully created and fostered them. Shorn of all diplomatic verbi-

age, it disclosed a determination not to transfer to Indians the reality of power at the Centre either during the war or after it.

India had been fed too long on promises of future freedom to be taken in by a fresh paraphrase of old policies. But it succeeded in creating in the Disruptionist an insuperable obstacle to the future political progress of the country. The political solidarity of the Nation was to be destroyed before any form of freedom could be even discussed.

Every time opinion in U.S.A. turned to Britain's refusal to Congress demands as a reason for keeping out of the War, Britain safely pointed to the disagreement between its leading politicians as a bar to her anxiety to keep all its pledges. Naturally Prof. Coupland also has forgotten to mention that the inability to agree in India was purely the result of British policy which had been brought into existence to prevent transfer of power at the Centre.

Mr. Jinnah the stern realist saw his chance, and played up to it. The Congress, unable to leave its moorings, had no other option but to keep up its morale by a symbolic individual civil disobedience, which was started in December 1940.

Having chosen its war policy towards India Britain pursued it with ruthless directness. All the Congress Provinces were governed by the British bureaucracy under Section 93 of the Constitution Act. The Non-Congress



Provinces were governed by ministries which but thinly veiled the autocracy of the British Governor. Mr. Jinnah rode on the crest of the British policy. The individual civil disobedience was described by him "as an attempt to take advantage of the war to force the Congress programme on the British Government". This attitude has now become a settled frame of mind with the President of the Muslim League; every attempt at securing a National Government has since been an open affront to him and the community he claims to represent. The Lahore Resolution was made into a creed. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the loyal ally of the Government, opposed Pakistan in the Punjab and supported partition out of it. He declined to part company with Mr. Jinnah, for it did not suit the British Government to deprive the Muslim League of his support. Wisely Mr. Jinnah played up to the British policy by not carrying his non-co-operation with the war effort beyond words and gestures.

Just as Hitler was supported by Britain at first in order to deprive France of the European hegemony and Russia of its possible international ambitions, the British Government strengthened Mr. Jinnah to block India's path to a National Government during the War. But in one case, so in the other, the creature of the policy proved to be a Frankenstein. The Premiers of the Punjab, Bengal and Sind and Begum Shah Nawaz were either made to resign or expelled from the League for

having joined the Defence Council. Mr. Jinnah was thereby giving a foretaste of his power to the Government; but they wanted him badly and, therefore, suffered him cheerfully. The Prime Ministers, greater friends of Government than of Mr. Jinnah, remained nominally loyal to the League. The League, the British policy required, was not to be weakened.

In the meantime, to use the words of Gandhiji, "Mr. Amery insulted Indian intelligence by reiterating *ad nauseam* that Indian political parties have but to agree among themselves and Great Britain would register the will of a United India." Every public man in India knew Mr. Amery's attitude and as a critic picturesquely stated every time he opened his mouth there was a Dunkirk in the pre-war opinion in India. In the meantime the Hindu Mahasabha followed the policy of supporting the British Government and bitterly fighting the Congress on the one hand and the League on the other. But a policy which supported the British in their device to frustrate the destiny of India failed to secure the support of the Hindu masses in the country. In the meantime, by adroit manoeuvres, Pakistan, undefined and unqualified, was made the one demand without which the Muslim League would not lift its veto on political progress.

Then came the fall of Singapore. The shadow of Japanese invasion fell athwart the land. Those of us who were for burying all controversies and forming a National Govern-

ment to resist Japan felt a flutter of hope when Mr. Churchill announced that Sir Stafford Cripps would come to India to put through a "just and final" solution. It is futile to apportion blame for the failure of the Cripps Mission as Prof. Coupland has tried to do. The war had broken up old political moorings, and few could take a view detached from their old habits of mind. And the old historic distrust between India and Britain was there to do its work.

The following comparative table would show the relative position of the Cripps Proposals :—

### **The Objective After the War**

#### ***A. August Offer of 1940***

A New Constitution framed by Indians subject to Britain's obligations relating to (1) Defence, (2) Minority rights, (3) Treaties with States, (4) Secretary of State's services.

This is practically an offer to allow Indians to modify the Act of 1935. Mr. Amery in his speech, however, used the word Dominion Status as vaguely indicating the *ultimate* goal.

#### ***B. Cripps Offer***

A new Indian Union with full Dominion Status after the War with power to secede in order to achieve the earliest possible realisation of self-government subject to a treaty to cover

all matters arising out of the complete transfer, particularly racial and religious minorities.

*C. Gandhiji's Offer, 1939*

A Constitution which will make India a free and democrate country.

*D. Gandhiji's Offer, 1944*

Independence.

### **The Constitution-making Machinery**

*A. August Offer, 1940*

Representative Indian Body, primarily it being the responsibility of Indians to frame the new Constitution.

*B. Cripps Offer, 1942*

Constituent Assembly elected by the lower houses of the Provincial Legislatures and representatives of Indian States on a popular basis.

*C. & D.:* Gandhiji's both offers are not explicit as regards the Constitution making machinery, but a constituent assembly may be assumed.

The interim machinery may now be left out of consideration, as circumstances make it no longer a practical proposition.

The Cripps Offer was the one serious attempt of Britain to reverse its policy. The price which Britain wanted was association with the existing Government in its war effort

more or less on the lines of Gandhiji's offer of 1939.

Cripps' failure was a major calamity in modern Indian History.

Britain soon recovered from its momentary lapse into fair dealing towards India. As a matter of practical politics also once the Cripps offer was turned down the question of national government fell to the ground. The British had to carry on the fight without or against popular support and they succeeded beyond expectations. They expected an early collapse on the Indian frontier; they succeeded in stemming the tide of the Japanese aggression in the East. They were afraid of general lack of support in India; but in a starving country of millions it was found not so difficult to secure men to do profitable war jobs. A very large section of the country came to help in the war effort directly or indirectly.

The octopus of the Defence of India Act gave the British autocracy a tremendous power, which it fully exploited for suppressing national activities in the name of War. During the "Quit India Movement", Mr. Jinnah actively, though indirectly, lent support to the British Government, and the power of the League came to be consolidated in non-Congress provinces. Sir Nazim-ud-din, in the name of the League but more with the help of the British Governor, formed a ministry in Bengal. If any attempt was made to impose a federal constitution, 'Moslim India,' stated

a Resolution of the League Session at Delhi in April 1943, 'with all its might' would resist it; 'a strife bloodstained and misery' would result, the responsibility for which would 'rest on the British Government alone.' Lord Linlithgow in his furious dislike of the Quit India Movement backed up the Muslim League ministries at all cost. Even at the time of the Bengal Famine scandal the Bengal Ministry had his whole-hearted support. Thus ended the second stage of British policy when Pakistan was created into an insuperable barrier against national aspirations.

During the last months of Lord Linlithgow's regime, however, the British Government got ready to give fight to the Frankenstein that they had raised. The Quit India movement was crushed. The war activities were going on smoothly; the war was being won. And in one of his last speeches the Viceroy emphasized the 'geographical unity' of India. This was followed up more actively by Lord Wavell. By reason of his drive the Bengal Ministry was made to have a keener appreciation of its duty to the starving public. In his first speech to the Assembly he also put before the country the ideal of coalition ministries like that of the Punjab: the British solution which ruled out all ministries which drew their strength purely from party support and which, in consequence, were independent of the British Governor. Prof. Coupland in his book also dealt with the case against Pakistan effectively.

Mr. Jinnah saw the challenge which all these acts and utterances implied, and accepted it. He selected the Punjab as the field for his trial of strength. It was the busiest centre of war effort. The Unionist Ministry was the prize boy of the new Viceroy. It had a new Premier who lacked experience. The President of the Muslim League, therefore, decided to bring the Ministry under his control instead of allowing his nominal suzerainty to continue. It was a most artfully laid campaign. But he miscalculated the depths to which the roots of the Unionist Ministry had gone in the Province; nor did he assess the lack of pro-Pakistan feeling among the Muslims and the strength of anti-Pakistan feeling among the non-Muslims. The urban and rural Hindus, who had been divided so far, came together. The Sikhs, pro-League and anti-League, combined. The Hindus and the Sikhs in spite of certain differences allied themselves against the blitzkrieg. Premier Khizr's hold over a large majority of Muslim members of the Legislative Assembly remained unchallenged. The Governor was equally firm. All interests except a few Muslim League members joined hands. It was clearly a round between the British Government and the Frankenstein which they had raised; and the British came out successful.

British Imperial policy had worked out the policy of frustrating the national aspirations till the barrier erected by them became a danger in itself.

## X

# DETERMINING FACTORS OF THE INDIAN SITUATION

### 1. *British Imperial Policy*

The different forces operating upon the Indian situation at present may now be considered. Of them the powerful are :—

- (a) British policies ;
- (b) International exigencies ;
- (c) Indian Nationalism ; and
- (d) Disruptionism.

No doubt there are minor forces like the Indian States, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Scheduled Castes and the British trade and other interests. But by reason of their inherent weakness or studied policy they are the willing or unwilling pawns of the British imperial policy and will exercise very little independent influence on the solution of the Indian problem.

Of the British policy the two main factors are (i) party position in England and (ii) British self-interest. It is stated over and over again by British friends that the heart of the British public is sound. Even if there is such a heart it is known to play very little effective part in the actual policies which guide British rule in India. The British public, no doubt, has generally a broad sympathy for the under-dogs of the world, particularly when their own



interests are not much at stake. But once the public is in the grip of the party machines and have elected their accredited representatives, the latter rarely take a liberal view unless it is dictated by self-interest. This self-interest, however, is guided by the British tradition of not forfeiting the sympathies of those whom they govern or of other powerful nations of the world.

The old myth that a change of ministers or a shift of power among the parties in the Parliament can bring about a change in the essentials of imperial policy stands long since exploded. It may be that a Churchill may provide a reactionary urge or a Ramsay MacDonald, a liberal one. But in the end the results are not likely to be very different. The policies will be guided by the possessive sense which characterises the subconscious political mind in Britain. In this view, therefore, whether Mr. Churchill remains the Prime Minister after the war or not, cannot make much difference except that the reactionary attitude of such an aggressive leader towards India may create greater difficulties. The deciding factor would really be the large number of younger Conservatives who now dominate the Parliament and who have a wider vision than those who have been brought up in the die-hard Tory tradition of the last generation. This younger Conservative mind in England is genuinely perturbed over India. But it cannot think in terms of India being allowed the power or the

opportunity to drift out of the ambit of the British Empire.

It appears an impossibility that a man like Sir Stafford Cripps, with his great sympathy for India but without any party behind him, can influence this policy. He dominated in 1942 only by reason of his great success in Russia; it is doubtful whether he will be able to do it again.

The British policy, therefore, of the future will take into account primarily the interest which Britain has in India. This country is a vast reservoir of economic strength for Britain. The Sterling balances will provide an easy means for buying raw materials from India cheap and selling her manufactured articles at an artificially inflated price. It is equally likely that the British Industry would like to exploit the Indian market by starting manufacturing centres in India. For the financial recovery of Britain, in the post-war world, India is a great asset; every effort, therefore, will be made to keep India safe for British business interests.

This very self-interest will dictate, however, the wisdom of raising the standard of living in India and to convert discharged servicemen into willing supporters of British rule. Britain is also not likely to ignore the vast achievement of Indians in the field of industry and commerce. However much the British businessmen would like to wipe out their Indian brethren, they realise that it is difficult to do

so without producing disastrous results. They can't sell the goods to a buyer who hates them. Self-interest would incline them to enter into alliance with Indian industry and commerce.

There is no doubt the bureaucratic solution of having a large army of state officials, big and small, who in the name of education, agricultural development or regulating essential service will be expected to provide the network of governmental influence. Most of the elaborate and costly plans in education, agriculture etc. which are now before the country are intended to supply present propaganda.

If the British statesmen who rule the country at present can help it, they will by means of such schemes convert British rule in India into a benevolent trusteeship which would feed and clothe and educate the Indians just sufficient to provide soldiers for the British army, raw materials for the British factory and market for British goods and just enough of loyal supporters to create the impression outside that the British Empire is the last word in human progress. Sane British statesmanship, however, will not accept it as the only, or, for the matter of that, the principal solution.

So far as Britain itself is concerned, what will stand in the way of this imperial policy is the pledge contained in the Cripps Offer of giving India the status of a Dominion and a constitution framed by her own people. As with the August announcement of 1915, many and devious will be the ways in which the

promise would be sought to be broken or whittled down. But the British public will scarcely put up with an attempt to revert to anything like the pre-war control of India. British tradition has produced something resembling a political conscience. It always prevents a British statesman, however reactionary, from breaking its pledge in a manner which he cannot defend.

## XI

### DISRUPTIONISM AS DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE INDIAN SITUATION

By Disruptionism I mean not only the Pakistan movement but every urge in the country which is destructive of national integrity and obstructs adjustment of interests within an All-India frame-work. In this factor the most important element is the Hindu-Muslim mal-adjustment.

#### (1)

In the pre-British period, there was an equilibrium between the aggressive tendencies of Islam and the protective vigour of Hinduism in all parts of the country. Without interdin-  
ing or inter-marriage there was a close association in different walks of life based on a tacit non-aggression pact reared on centuries of adjustment.

When the British rule and Western educa-

tion came to India the highly educated Hindus and Mussalmans found a fresh sense of unity in the English language and thought, in absorbing English ways and in leavening their adjustment with mid-Victorian nationalism which related their political aspirations to India as motherland.

At the same time, impact with the West produced several factors which disturbed the existing harmony between the two communities.

The Hindu, who received the benefit of modern education, became comparatively secularized in his outlook and found in Nationalism a new group sentiment to replace the old synthesis of social orders, *Varnashramadharma*. Religious bigotry continued its hold over the Muslims and prevented the secularization of the group sentiments. In consequence, a difference in outlook and in their respective positions in a new scheme of things, sprang up between the two communities. Political leaders became anxious not to lose the numerical strength of their followers. The stage was thus set for the revival of religious aggression which had disappeared.

The other and more disturbing factor was University Education.

The Hindus developed language and literature and cultural associations with the aid of Hindu history and Sanskritic beauty. The Muslim university students in the north, for there were very few in other parts of India, naturally turned to Muslim heroes who had devastated India and to Persian and Arabic for their inspiration. Thus the most essential bond,

of language, literature and historic association, came to be relaxed. As education advanced among the Muslims, the common forms of life were forgotten and Islamic culture and loyalty to Islam, as detached from India, came to be stressed. The Hindus and Muslims who had pursued their social and religious ways side by side for centuries, suddenly began to find themselves in two different cultural hemispheres.

But right till the Partition of Bengal, the educated Hindus and Muslims were agreed in secularizing their group sentiment and pursuing the path of nationalism related to India as the Motherland. Had this progress been left undisturbed by the British, the harmony of national aspirations at the top would have slowly percolated to the lower strata of society. But the British presented separate electorates to the Muslims; the community was segregated; religious passion was made the measure of politics; and broad-minded nationalist Muslims were suddenly made unrepresentative of their own community. The new leaders thrown up by this disruptive design, encouraged religious aggression, developed a technique of making every grievance, real or imaginary, a lever to rouse the defensive instincts of the community against the Hindus.

(2)

When the Congress broke with the British in 1939, Disruption which was no more than a bare idea was exploited by the British to create an obstacle, which now has assumed a sinister shape.

Mr. Jinnah has recently in his letters to Gandhiji given us an idea of what its latest phase means.

First, the Muslims of India are a separate Nation, and the Nation has an inherent right of self-determination.

Secondly, Sind, Baluchistan, N.-W. F., Punjab and Bengal and Assam as they are now, are Muslim homelands, subject to minor territorial adjustments without any regard to the crores of Hindus who are residents of these provinces and irrespective of the fact whether as in Assam they are a majority. This attitude logically implies that a dozen Mussalmans in any corner of India are part of a Nation which sprawls across the whole continent; that these dozen, even if they be near Cape Comorin, have a right to determining what they should do with any part of the country even if it be predominantly Hindu; and that in determining whether any part of this country should be under Muslim control, the non-Muslim, inhabiting their territory, has no right even to be consulted.

Thirdly, it makes a sweeping claim that the Muslims historically, ethnically or culturally have nothing in common with the Hindus of this country.

The fact that these claims are entirely fictitious makes no difference; that every territory occupied by Hindus is as much their homeland as the Muslims inhabiting equally has no appeal; that the doctrine of religious

nationalism employed with the two-nation theory is anachronistic and unrealisable does not matter.

Even the Sultans of Delhi never ventured to put forward such a claim. It is put forward not by fanatic divines but by a shrewd lawyer, who is expected to know that it will be resisted. This Disruptionism therefore is not intended to be compromised but only as a slogan to rouse the Muslims against the Hindus so that thereby they may become a compact and aggressive party in order to dominate the country. The Britishers think that they could utilise this high explosive to their advantage. The Congress hoped to extract its teeth by reason and good sense. Both are now coming to realize that it is no mere phantom but a grim reality.

(3)

Disruptionism is for the moment the most serious impediment to the country's progress. It asks the Congress to give up its demand for independence; to forswear the demand for a federal centre and for a democratic constituent assembly; and to withdraw the August Resolution, "which is inimical to the ideals and demands of Muslim India."\* To Britain, threats are delivered from time to time not to do anything to offend Muslim India on pain of facing 'strife, bloodshed and misery.'

This attitude has thriven on a belief that

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\**Mr. Jinnah's letter, 28rd September, 1944.*



the Hindus could easily be overawed. The self-restraint which the Gandhian policy has imposed on the Congress Hindus, who form the majority of politically-minded Hindus in the country, is taken as weakness. In the Congress antagonism to British government and its policy of non-co-operation, Disruptionism finds its greatest opportunity.

The national movement in India started with two fixed ideas: First, that Hindu-Muslim antagonism is the creation of British rule; Secondly, that it is possible to remove that antagonism by spontaneous efforts on the part of the two communities in order to wrest power from Britain. This attitude, though it has proved ineffective, is being believed by a large number of men of ability and discrimination in this country and is accepted by millions of Hindus as a self-evident truth.

These ideas in the minds of peace-loving Hindus have led them to make offers of an ever-growing character which have whetted the appetite of Muslim communalism. So long as Muslim communalism believes, and not without reason, that it is possible to extract more favourable terms from the Hindus by either overawing them or by playing upon their desire of getting rid of foreign bondage, it will never be in a mood to come to any permanent settlement.

The Hindu-Muslim question is not a two-sided question. It is a triangle, as aptly described by Mr. Ashok Mehta. Many complications have been created by an attempt on

the part of the Hindu angle to coalesce with the Muslim angle in order to eliminate the British angle altogether. The fact cannot succeed in geometry. It has not succeeded in politics.

It would be wrong to assume that all thoughtful Muslims in the country hold these views or approve of them. But the nationalist Muslim leaders outside N.-W. F. have little Muslim following. The other nationalist Muslims are, like Liberals, patriotic men to whom mass organization is an unknown art. They cannot approach the Muslim masses through the Congress; they have no cohesion; they have no press of their own; they cannot produce a goal one-tenth as alluring to the Muslim masses as an Islamic State on the lines of the Quoran, where every Muslim is a free citizen and every non-Muslim is not. Pakistan as an anti-Hindu rallying cry and Mr. Jinnah as its apostle have acquired a hold over the Muslim masses, which the Nationalist Muslims cannot displace and the Hindus cannot combat. It can only disappear when Pakistan is faced with reality, either of resistance or unachievability. Then only will these Muslim leaders command the respect of their community. But Britain sees to it that the reality is not presented.

This bitter truth must be faced by realists. Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be realized unless it is in the British interests. The two-nation theory has, in the meantime, let loose a sinister urge which is sure to drive the wedge deeper between the two communities.

It would be erroneous to believe that Disruptionism cannot be rendered comparatively innocuous. Its mainstay is the British Government. In the Punjab no sooner the British Government decided to fight, Mr. Jinnah lost his hold, at any rate over the Muslim members of the Assembly. In Sind, at a moment's notice from the Governor, Sir Ghulam Hussein can form a ministry not subject even to the nominal suzerainty of the Muslim League. If Mr. Casey wishes, the European members of the Bengal Assembly can in one day replace the Muslim League Ministry by a coalition ministry. The front rank Leaguers are Nawabs, Government contractors and other respectables who have never stood outside the shadow of official favour and have no courage or training to do so. The President of the League, therefore cannot carry his generals into a camp opposed to the British without being left with a helpless minority. And he knows it.

The British, therefore, have still the whip hand over the Disruptionism which they have done so much to raise. But it will be used only if the secessionist tendencies of the nationalists are checked, not otherwise. So long as the British are convinced that the concession of self-government will immediately set up the cry of 'out of the Commonwealth' and give India the power to ally with Britain's international rivals against her, they will continue to use the Disruptionists as instruments of our

national frustration. So long, will the deadlock continue.

'No truck with British Imperialism, is a tempting battle cry which raises the zeal to suffer and die for the Motherland; but time and again it has blocked our path to immediate progress. To the Indian mind, impatient of bondage, complete independence reduced to an appealing verbal tabloid has a greater appeal than the reality of limited power. It fails to realize that in the world of today, Britain has unlimited military resources; that to drive Britain to leave the shores of India by a *coup d'etat* is a dream; that India cannot do without an international frame-work for some time and that India cannot advance unless its present institutional continuity remains unbroken during the period when the transfer of power takes place.

If the Hindu mind cannot reconcile itself to complete autonomy within the Commonwealth, Britain would not destroy the Frankenstein. The Hindu-Muslim tension will grow till the life of the country is marred by a long-drawn internecine conflict. And in the end, the military power of Britain will continue to enforce law and order as in Palestine, to the prejudice of all parties including Britain herself.

To summarize : the Indian deadlock cannot be resolved unless Britain reverses her policy of supporting Disruptionism. Britain will not do it unless she rids herself of the nightmare

of India seceding from her ambit; and unless Britain and the nationalists both realize that secession in the post-war world is a physical impossibility, it will not be got rid of. British statesmen will realize this fact soon enough; but not the panicky British bureaucracy. The Nationalists, non-Congress to a man, and a large section of the Congress also realize the same. But for the anti-imperialist section of Congressmen the realization has been and will be difficult; for it represents the Ideal, which forms the motive power, and creates the sanction, in all mass movements of freedom.

## XII

### ZONAL DIVISION OF INDIA

Indian Nationalism of today is a curious composite. Its ingredients are the racial unity and the cultural homogeneity of her people; geographical integrity of the country and its apotheosis as the Mother; the love of freedom and the hatred of foreign rule; the sentiment, the tradition and the institutional and juristic unity fostered during the British period; the effects of the industrial revolution in India which has proceeded on the more or less familiar lines of England; and the ideal of a homogeneous nation state, which under the influence of Mazzini and John Stuart Mill, moulded the political outlook of educated India. Both Hindus and Muslims in many walks of life pursue friendly relations, but to men in bondage, politi-

cal freedom is the most vital issue dominating life.

The outstanding fact, however, is that from the political point of view there is no Hindu-Muslim unity today, for the Muslim masses, in recent years, have been taught a philosophy of national separatism. "They are different in culture from the Hindus. India is not their motherland, one has to be made for them. Subservient alliance with the British is better than freedom in a land with the Hindu majority. Institutions must be Koranic, the present institutional life in India is alien, unIslamic. There is no Indian nation, nor is there a possibility of evolving one. The Muslims, wherever they live in India, are a nation." Thus a complete and exclusive psychological outlook is being taught to, and is accepted by, a large number of political-minded Muslims. In some parts of the country it is now accepted by the ignorant masses as an aspect of religion.

The original Congress outlook that all communities in India should segregate their religious passions to evolve a national consciousness, is blurred. Hindu-Muslim riots of recent years are not spasmodic outbursts of fanaticism. They have a deeper urge. They are fanned by the Pakistan ideology.

A sub-conscious urge to zonal division was given because the constitutional integrity of India was broken up by the end of 1939 by the resignation of the Congress Ministries. The predominantly Hindu provinces came to be

governed by the British Governors and the bureaucracy. In the predominantly Muslim provinces Muslim Ministries participated in power and were left free to follow their communal interests. Non-co-operation with the war effort and the "Quit India" was largely confined to the Hindu Provinces: the Muslim Provinces openly co-operated with the war effort.

But the zonal division came into practical politics when Gandhiji accepted the Rajaji formula. The most powerful spokesman of Indian Nationalism negotiated with the frank exponent of the two-nation theory on the possible basis of two Indias. During the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Indian Nationalism was ready, if the Muslims so wished, to divide the country into a Hindu and a Muslim zone and to be related only to a part of the country in scope and contents. The Rajaji formula provides for a plebiscite, but the safeguard is illusory. In any broad plebiscite in the Muslim areas, Indian Nationalism preached by a predominantly Hindu organisation will have no chance against Pakistan, preached by a purely Muslim Organization and supported by religious fervour.

In conceding the Rajaji formula with its two sovereign states Gandhiji made a generous gesture of conciliation. Nationalism as an inalienable background of India's destiny, however, met with a serious setback, when Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah parted in disagreement as to details. But the lowest common measure of their agreement was that the division of a

country into a Hindu zone and a Muslim zone would be a way out of the communal differences.

The only considerations which would justify a division of India into zones are :—

First, the Hindus and Muslims, each should have a zone of its own for its unfettered development and,

Secondly, the zones should be so formed that the communal problems are reduced to a minimum without multiplying the spheres of antagonism ; and

Lastly, the purpose of such a division should not be to consolidate Muslims at the expense of Hindus, but also to provide Hindus with the same scope of development which Muslims claim.

Any division which does not satisfy these conditions is utterly worthless.

These are the four schemes for a zonal division of India :

- (a) Mr. Jinnah's scheme as suggested in his letters to Gandhiji,
- (b) The scheme proposed in the Rajaji formula,
- (c) Prof. Coupland's scheme of Regionalism,
- (d) The scheme put forward in the Draft Declaration of March 1942.

'The zone which Mr. Jinnah wants for Muslims contains three separate classes areas :



(1) Sind, Baluchistan, N.-W. F. P. which are Muslim zones already.

(2) The Punjab with 43 per cent of non-Muslims and Bengal with 45·27 per cent of Hindus, both the provinces including vast territories which are predominantly occupied by the Hindus.

(3) Assam, which is 6·28 per cent Hindu. If Sylhet District which has 60 per cent Muslims is left out, Hindus in this province will be nearer 75 per cent.

This Muslim zone or rather zones will have a Muslim population of 5·86 crores, and a Hindu population of 4·10 crores and about 45 lakhs of non-Muslims.

It will bristle with all the present problems, and a few more, all of them much more intensified. The position of Muslim minorities, on the other hand, in the Hindu zone, will remain the same or worse as the urge for securing Hindu-Muslim unity will disappear from the Hindus. The demand for religious homogeneity would also require the enactment of prohibition laws against immigration of Hindus into the Muslim zone and the Muslims into the Hindu zones leading to mutual irritation.

A transfer of populations, though an attractive proposal in theory, is extremely difficult in practice. The misfortunes which overtook such experiments in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, and the lot of evacuees all the world over during the present war, ought to serve as a warning to all those who think of transporting

millions and breaking up territorial loyalties. The plight of their co-religionists in the other zone, real or fancied would also lead to disturbed relations on both sides. The zones may also be driven to take retaliatory measures against the minorities in their zones, creating a deeper antagonism between the zones. The transfer of predominantly Hindu areas under exclusively Muslim rule would lead to a bitter Hindu feeling of recovering their lost land and lead to a new passion which is sure to complicate the future for a considerable time.

The suggested boundaries of Muslim zones are not based on fairness or on a basis, physical or natural, but on an assumption that in any solution the Muslim interests alone have to be looked to. On the footing of nationalism related to India as one country, weightage in favour of a minority as a safeguard may become necessary. But the zonal division itself proceeds on the basis that each community has to have a separate homeland for itself. On this basis there is no majority ; only two units. If Muslims want every inch of contiguous territory predominantly occupied by them for a zone for themselves, why should the Hindus be deprived of a similar right ? In the proposed division, 13 non-Muslim districts of the Punjab have to be in the Muslim zone because the remaining 17 districts are Muslim. In Bengal 12 Hindu districts must go with 16 Muslim districts to make up the Muslim zone. But in Assam, one Muslim district cannot go with 14 Hindu districts, the 14 Hindu districts have to

go to make up the Muslim zone because of one Muslim district ! That is not a zonal division, it is a conquest.

The zones as proposed by the Rajaji Formula are logical, fair, and satisfy to some extent the essential requirements on which a division can be justified. It secures to the Muslim zone the whole of the area which is predominantly Muslim. The Hindu districts of the Punjab and Bengal and Assam remain in the Hindu zone. The Muslim zone will have a population of 6·82 crores out of which 4·95 crores or 74 per cent will be Muslim and 1·70 crores or 24 per cent will be Hindu.

The community wanting a zone for itself for realising its destiny as a separate nationality cannot do so at the cost of the other. If self-determination is insisted on by a community on the ground of a religious bond or cultural autonomy the area predominantly occupied by members of another religion are equally entitled to determine theirs.

The division of the Punjab and Bengal into a predominantly Muslim and predominantly non-Muslim Punjab is not a new idea. Sir Geoffrey Corbett placed it before the Round Table Conference. In October a leader of the Muslim League, in the name of Mr. Jinnah, handed over such a proposal to Raja Maheshwar Dayal and some of us met at Delhi in October 1942 to discuss its implications. The Sikh leaders who were present then developed the Azad Punjab scheme on its basis.

But the Punjab finds it very difficult to reconcile itself to a division. Unless stamped by outside politico-religious agitation the Muslims of the Punjab will not like the idea of going out of India or partitioning the Province. A courageous Muslim leader can always carry with him a majority of Muslims in the province against the League, whose hold so far extends only to the middle class city Muslims. The Hindus to a man are against it. Their organisations, religious and educational, are spread over the whole province. The Sikhs have now realised that Pakistan will render them helpless and a division of the province will leave them divided. Their Gurudwaras are a network which stretches throughout the Province. The bond of economic unity in the Punjab is none too weak, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs owe a considerable part of their prosperity to the military budget of an All-India centre. Economic interests of the districts are interlinked. The caste feeling between Jats, Khattris and Vaishyas still bind members of each caste together irrespective of difference in religion, and the Unionist Party is its living symbol. Punjabi is the mother tongue of all, and the administrative unity of the Punjab has seventy-five years of institutional life behind it. And the Punjabi, the Pathans, the Sindhi and the Baluchi have no common political or religious will.

The position in Bengal is slightly different. Hindus and Muslims in Bengal have many more things in common than the Hindus and Muslims

of other provinces. The Muslims are numerically the larger community. But the general life of both communities is predominantly Hindu and their mother tongue is the same. If the Muslim and Hindu zones in Bengal have to be separate, the Bengali speaking Hindus will be cut into halves. There will be one crore twelve lakhs of Hindus in the Muslim area against one crore fourteen lakhs in the Hindu area. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims will like to part with Calcutta which is 74 per cent Hindu and surrounded by a Hindu belt. Bengal has its tradition of administrative unity going back to over a century and its memory of having fought for its unity in the partition days. Naturally, the very idea of dividing the Bengali-speaking people is repugnant to the people as a whole.

Pakistan ideology has produced a growing antagonism between the Hindus and a section of the Muslims. The Dacca riots are a recent memory. Defensive preparation to preserve Hindu learning and culture are apace. But the Pakistan feeling is fostered by outsiders; to the Leaguers in power, Pakistan only provides a good slogan for evoking party loyalty. The bulk of the Muslims are enamoured of power over the Province, but have no love for being submerged in solid Muslim zone.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee recently stated "the tyranny of the Muslim League Ministers on Hindus and even on Muslims who do not agree with the Muslim League politics backed by the powerful British support is a

positive slur on the country's administration".

The fact, therefore, is that Sind, Baluchistan, and N.-W. F. P. form the natural Muslim zone, if the religious bond is considered. In the Punjab all communities are strongly attached to the Province as a whole, but the Muslim influence is predominant. In Bengal there is homogeneity among the people and attachment to Bengal as a whole, and the Hindu influence predominates. It is only the Muslim League supported by the British which has made of these provinces the cockpits of communalism.

Self-determination is brought into service to support disruption. It is, however, a principle of doubtful validity. No nation has been formed without repressing the centrifugal tendencies of refractory groups or without overcoming a conflicting group sentiment, religious, racial or geographical. Even as a political concept, it can only be of any practical use if the nationality seeking self-determination has the guarantee of inherent military and economic self-sufficiency.

"The Treaty of Versailles ought to be a warning to all champions of self-determination. Its attempts to solve the minority problem Balkanised Europe ; almost it may be said that it created a separate state wherever it found a separate minority. But the history of the last twenty years should have taught us, if it has taught us anything, that there is no

solution of the minority problems along these lines.”<sup>1</sup>

Self-determination ridden to death has brought in the disasters of World War II. It produced feeble states with coalition governments which could not defend nor enforce law and order. Minority claims were raised to the level of national self-determination. Sudetan minorities became convenient levers in the hands of ambitious neighbours.

“The self-destruction of European supremacy has brought about a world-wide national awakening, for which the war slogan of national self-determination supplies the ideological basis. A revolutionary movement for national independence swept, and is still sweeping over central and eastern Europe, the near and the far East, and even over large parts of the American Continent”.<sup>2</sup>

The whole doctrine of national sovereignty has been found wanting. The world is progressing towards a federation of States. The right of making peace and war during this World War II has been taken out of the hands of not only small nationalities but also out of large nations which do not possess a world organisation at their disposal. The theory of self-determination for nationalities and Nation States has now only the limited meaning that a cul-

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<sup>1</sup>Joad, *What Is A State, And Why Not Say So*, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>*Nationalism, Royal Institute of International Affairs*, p. 236.

ture group should be given just that measure of autonomy which would enable it to bring out its best cultural traits.

Experience has shown the wisdom of Lord Acton's profound observation. "The co-existence of several nationalities in a State is the best test as well as the best security of its freedom. It is also one of the best instruments of civilization.....The combination of different nations in one State is as necessary a condition of civilized life as the combination of men in Society".

The zonal division of India, therefore, cannot be justified on the wide ground of self-determination. It can only be justified on the ground of each culture group being left free in matters relating to culture. It is untrue in fact that the Hindus and the Muslims, as distinct communities, form distinct cultural groups. Secondly the Punjabis, the Pathans, the Baluchi and the Sindhi Muslims are not known to be dying for consolidation.

The right of self-determination is claimed by a small organised body whose extreme political cry has caught the imagination of the local Muslims particularly of Hindu areas. This organisation though speaking in the name of sometimes 9 crores and sometimes 10 crores of Muslims is said to draw its support from the Muslim Ministries of five provinces including Assam. These Ministries are in substance the creatures of the British policy rather than the spear-heads of a popular movement.

If the zonal division, therefore, has to be



conceded it is only because the most organised of the Muslim party, in the country declines to permit progress except on the condition of such a zone being concerned. The claim of zonal division, therefore, is not based on anything more than the insistence of a party to have an undisturbed zone to consolidate its power and influence over Muslims. The Muslim zone therefore is the price which India has to pay for political blackmail.

The position taken up by the Hindus of the Punjab and Bengal that they will not get into a Muslim zone nor allow a partition of their respective provinces is natural. It proceeds from a belief—which I am afraid is not far wrong—that once they become the subjects of a professedly Muslim State, they will use the help of the other Hindus in their struggle to survive as a distinct culture-group. But if the price has to be paid the choice before them would be (a) whether to go in a Muslim zone with its ambition of religious citizenship, or (b) whether to disrupt their provincial tie and join the Hindu zone, or (c) whether to support the British in their desire to continue their alien pressure for unity till the Hindu-Muslim differences are adjusted by exhaustion.

In the last alternative they will find themselves opposed by all Muslims and Hindus of the Hindu provinces. Whether they prefer the homogeneity of the religious zone, that is the ultimate question which the Hindus of Bengal and Punjab may have to face. The Hindus of

the Punjab and Bengal are therefore entitled to a right to determine their future if a zonal division is generally accepted.

Another important lesson which can be drawn from recent history has been that where territorial nationalism comes into conflict with religious nationalism, the latter goes under. In spite of the so-called unity of Islam, Arabs, Turks, Egyptians, Mongols and Persians have evolved a separate national consciousness. Similarly if Indian Nationalism is displaced, group sentiments related to the Punjab, N.-W. F. P., Sind, and Bengal will soon destroy the flimsy bond in which Islam is supposed to bind the Baluch, the Pathan, the Punjabi and the Bengali Muslims. We saw during the Gandhi-Jinnah talks how once Nationalism was found in jeopardy, the Provincial and racial group sentiments began to clamour for self-expression.

In this age of reason and science, religion cannot be a predominant factor to support the national sentiment. 'Petrified religious writs and fading psychological relics' to use the words of Stalin, 'cannot replace the living social, economic and cultural environments which surround a people'.

A third danger to be guarded against is that treaties and pacts between men however eminent or between groups of men however disciplined is no substitute for a frame-work of coercive power. Without such a structure, human beings and groups are not known to stick together. Groups, races and nations are too

untamed in their jealousies to be tethered quietly to pacts, however, seductive their terms. The Treaty of Versailles was attempted to be broken no sooner it was signed. The Covenant of the League of Nations was but a solemn farce. The Briand-Kellog Pact of 1928, the Economic Commission of European Union of 1929, the Disarmament Conference of 1932-33 were but pious efforts, frustrated in the very moment in which they appeared to be successful. Nearer home, the Lucknow Pact, the Congress-Khilafat alliance, the Sikander-Jinnah Pact were equally pious efforts which, unsupported by plenary power, proved ineffectual. *Without sanctions no pact between groups can last.*

The communal tension cannot be eased by dividing the country into zones in accordance with pacts however solemnly sworn. In the case of India even the semblance of such a pact is not within easy reach. What comes in the way of a search for an appropriate remedy for the communal tension is the general belief in India that human groups can evolve cohesion by mere agreement and without the aid of a framework of power.

Gandhiji has built up a framework of tremendous power. It is supported by the loyalty he evokes and the institutional strength of the Congress; by the sanctions of Satyagraha; by the influence of constructive activities he has started. But by the very nature of his technique he abjures all influence derived from the administrative machinery set up by the British.

In so doing a chance is being given to the British to encourage the Muslims to stand out of it in the hope of attempting a rival framework.

Gandhiji's effort to arrive at a settlement with Mr. Jinnah was in substance to wean them away from British help by setting up a confederacy of the two frameworks each controlling a compact zone. But Mr. Jinnah's framework could not stand without Britain's help or at least without her acquiescence. He, therefore, could not, dare not join the proposed confederacy.

Not that if Mr. Jinnah had joined, the two frameworks would have been one. Like other pacts, this one would have foundered on the distrust of the communities unless it had immediately evolved an agency with power to maintain its sanctity. Muslim antagonism would have become a sort of inter-statal war.

It is true that the Muslim League, in the mood in which it is, will not agree to one Constitution for India. But without a common framework with power to enforce the rule of law within and security without, zonal division, however fair, will only lead to neighbourly conflict.

### XIII

#### TWO-DOMINIONS SCHEME AND REGIONALISM

The two schemes propounded by Britishers and which provide for the zonal division of

India are (1) the Draft Declaration of March 30, 1942, on which the Cripps offer was based, and (2) Regionalism suggested by Prof. Coupland in his book 'The Future of India'. The clause of secession was evidently inserted in the Draft Declaration to satisfy Muslim ambitions for Pakistan. It runs :—

“(1) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides.

With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new Constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.'

The claim clearly envisages two Dominions in India, one made up of such parts of India as went to cohere and the other made up of the seceding provinces and states. It is so wide in its implications that it will not be difficult to completely atomise the country under the hegemony of the British Crown.

In the ordinary course of things the Congress provinces will form the Indian Dominion. Then the other Provinces and presumably the States will be free to combine into a second dominion, which for brevity's sake may be termed the Seceding Dominion. But if, for instance, the Punjab, the States of Baroda and Hyderabad and Bengal want to form part of the Seceding Dominion, where would be the geographical or cultural or for that matter any homogeneity between the different components of the

Dominion ? The States and the Provinces are geographically interlocked. If the Bombay Province comes into the Indian Dominion and the State of Baroda goes into the Seceding Dominion it would make it impossible for either Dominion to work out its own without interfering with the other. If Kashmir and Assam want to remain in the Indian Dominion and Hyderabad and Bengal want to go into the Seceding Dominion what will be the position of the country ?

The right of Dominion Status with power to secede conceded by the Draft Declaration of March 1942 was a concession given to Indian nationalism. It was made at the time when British fortunes were very low. They have now been revived. I see no guarantee that the British influence, wherever it can, will not try to steal away the allegiance of as many Indian States as possible to the Seceding Dominion. The Princes are too much under the influence of the Political Department of the Crown Representative and the White Dewans of some of the States, and are unable to do anything which conflicts with British interests. This influence will do its utmost to cut the geographical and political integrity of the country by interlacing territories of both dominions. The Seceding Dominion will itself be under the British control which like a python will fasten its hold over the body politic of the Indian Dominion. When that is achieved both the Dominions will be under the British Secretary of State who will be

the last judge to decide whether the two Dominions should quarrel or carry on their work harmoniously. In the result internal confusion will follow and freedom will be a mockery.

The two Dominions will be nothing more than mere clay in the hands of the British rulers of the country, without any hope of being free or coming together as a single nation at any time whatsoever.

The scheme suggested by Prof. Coupland is dubbed 'Regionalism'. It carries the following implications :—

(1) that India is to be divided into four different states as follows :—

### *I. The Indus Area*

This includes N.-W. F., the Punjab, British Baluchistan, Sind, Ajmer-Merwara. If states are included, it will include therein, Kashmir, N.-W. F. Agencies and States, the Punjab States, the Hill States, Baluchistan States, Rajputana except states in (II) below.

### *II. The Ganges Region*

U. P., Bihar, Orissa. If states are included it will include U. P. States, Gwalior, Orissa States, Central India States, east of Gwalior, Chhatisgarh States, States from Rajputana, Bharatpur, Bundi, Dholpur, Kotah and Karauli.

### *III. Delta Region*

Bengal, Assam. If states are included it will include Bengal States, Assam States, Sikkim.

#### IV. *Deccan*

Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, Coorg, Palhi Piplavad. If States are included it would include Western India States, Central India States, West and South of Gwalior, Gujarat States, Baroda, States from Rajputana, Banswara, Danta, Chuikhidar, Kancker, Kawarohi, Kairagah, Nandgaon, Deccan and Kolhapur States, Hyderabad, Madras States, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin.

2. (a) There would be an agency centre for all the four States which will concern itself with foreign affairs and defence, external trade or trade policy, currency, control of emigration and immigration, communications, wireless, telephone and telegraph and postal services, and industrial development.

(b) This Centre will not as in a Federation carry with it plenary power or dual citizenship. It would only act as an agent of the four different States.

The Central Legislature would not represent a nation but 'would reflect the nationalism of different regions'. The executive will also be a kind of committee more than a cabinet. Even the Supreme Court will be constituted of one judge each from different regions.

In this scheme there will be no national unity for India. New nations will be created out of the four regions into which India would be split by British fiat. This ingenuous device



represents the extreme outpost of the communal policy of Britain. Though professedly framed to satisfy the Muslim claim that they are a separate nation and give them a right of self-determination, it fails to solve the communal tension or to satisfy the Muslim ambition.

The population basis of the four regions would be as follows :—(in millions)

	Hindus	Muslims
Indus Area	21·34	31·90
Ganges Region	91·89	14·03
Delta Region	30·66	36·85
Deccan Region	110·44	11·22

In the Indus Region the Hindus will be 40 per cent as against 17 per cent in the Rajaji Formula. In the Delta they will be 45 per cent as against 29 per cent in the Rajaji Formula. The Indus Region will include Hindu States like Kashmir and Patiala. The Delta Region will include Hindu Assam and the Hindu States.

The author claims that Regionalism fulfils the first demand of the Muslim League, *viz.*, the political demarcation of Muslim homelands. He concedes the League claim that the Muslims are a nation. "If a people feel itself to be a nation, it is one" he says and adds that self-determination implies (1) the claim for a national home, (2) the right to a state fully sovereign. The concession is in a line with the old British policy of raising inchoate Muslim dreams into political slogans to frustrate the country's destiny.

A mere feeling is not nationhood ; it must also be based on tradition, collective willing, and a group sentiment related to a well defined territory. To be a nation and the aspiration to be one are two different things.

But in truth Regionalism gives no right of self-determination, no homogenous Muslim State, no sovereignty. The two Muslim zones will be in different States. Each zone will be loaded with a higher percentage of Hindus. The Hindu-Muslim tension will grow in intensity and in area. The Agency Centre, weak and divided, will be torn by keener communal passions than the Federal Centre under the Act of 1935.

The second claim is that the Muslims' fear of Hindu-raj will be allayed. It is not stated that it will bury the British fear of Nationalism by cutting it up into four geographical loyalties. Under Mr. Jinnah's scheme or the Rajaji Formula the Hindus have at any rate a common destiny, a motherland, though truncated, and a Nationalism related to the territory they occupy. Under Regionalism this will be destroyed. Leave aside an Indian nation, even a single Hindu nation will be out of question.

The third claim is that Regionalism will give a balance of two Hindu and two Muslim States. Why form four States if we can have two States?

The last claim is that it preserves Indian unity ! A more preposterous claim it is impossible to conceive. Regionalism cuts up India

into four States, to use the author's words 'four countries', with separate nationalisms. The Regions have no natural frontiers and residents of each have no group consciousness and no common desire to come together. The ultimate destiny of Indians to form a Nation-State will be gone, frustrated. There will be six crores of Sudetan Hindus in Muslim States. Inter-statal jealousies and quarrels will increase.

Politically, the scheme cuts India into four artificial divisions. It does not contemplate national unity even in the future. Nor is it made as the means to that end. With four States even the institutional unity of India reared by 150 years of British rule will be broken up. In the Agency Centre mere agents of two Hindu and two Muslim States will face each other inspired by inter-regional jealousy. The coalition executive of the Centre—the favourite remedy of Prof. Coupland—based on equality of representation and indirect elections, will only render bitterness perpetual. There will be no popular sanction behind it. The Centre will never work as a coercive framework of power even in central subjects, and the difference between the States will be too radical to be settled by a weak instrument like the Agency Centre.

The Central Government will cease to be a centre of international power. The defence of India with its land and sea frontiers cannot possibly be looked after by such a government which possesses no power or cohesion. The statal proportion and the communal proportions in the army will make the evolution of a nation-

al army impossible. If the Premier is a Hindu and Muslim by turns, conceivably the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief Justice may also be alternatively Hindu and Muslim. Whose will be the concern of defending the North Western Frontier or the Eastern Frontier? Where will be the power which would prevent the Regional States from allying themselves with powerful neighbours?

The answer is clear. The British Governor-General will continue to provide the strength to the weak Agency Centre. It will maintain the integrity of India with British troops. Foreign and inter-regional policies will be dominated by the British Governor-General who will set one State against the other.

The regional States themselves will have very few special functions of their own. Generally they will be warring with the Agency Centre against possible encroachment. There will be no distinctive affinity between the constituents of the regional States. The Rajputana States have nothing particularly in common with Sind, N.-W. F. P., and Baluchistan, and Gujarat has nothing distinctively common with Tamil Nad except the All-India feeling and the cultural and national consciousness which, however, will have gone.

Just as the British Governor-General will supply the strength and cohesion to the weak Agency Centre, the British Governor will provide for a similar deficiency in the weak and divided governments of the States.

If the States do not join this scheme of Regionalism, as Prof. Coupland thinks it to be likely, they will be left atomised and helpless; incapable of uniting, unable to look forward to a national status; dominated, controlled and rendered helpless by the Political Department of the Crown Representative. Under the pretext of satisfying Muslim ambitions, therefore, Regionalism has been devised to Balkanise India and destroy its political ambitions and to deny its national solidarity for ever.

Even the Tennessee River analogy does not apply to this scheme. The American experiment of developing the Tennessee River Valley is the result of co-ordinated effort of seven States for the fuller exploitation of the river. The authority so created has always been kept subject to the sovereign rights of the several States to which the parts of the territory belong. The Act was passed in the time of President Roosevelt in 1933 by the United States only for planning "for the proper use, conservation and development of the internal resources of the Tennessee River". All the elements which have made the Tennessee scheme a success are lacking in the proposed regionalism.

The use of the word Regionalism itself has suffered a translation in the hands of Prof. Coupland, just as Bottom got translated in the *Mid-summer Night's Dream* when he put on the ass's head. Regionalism strictly is a technical term devised for a new branch of knowledge; as a tool of research by specialists to push back the frontiers of our ignorance. But when it is

used for political purposes they mislead the unwary and confuse the issue. Regionalism is a new concept in geography. It was started as a protest against a school which made physical environments the only determinant of the fortunes of man. With the growth of industrialism and modern communications it was realised that human factors influence nature equally with, if not more than, physical determinants. Region was thus defined as a complex factor of natural and human factors in their interaction. Such a region is treated as an integral part of the human geography.

From this point of view the whole of India is a region, not any part of it; certainly not the arbitrary patchwork regions which Prof. Coupland's imagination has furnished us with. For the purpose of his new proposal he ignores human factors, particularly the psychological make-up of the human aggregation in India. Of course nobody expects the British professor working out the aims of Britain's imperial policies to take into account the homogeneity of Indian cultural traditions or the vigour of its modern Nationalism. But, at any rate, intellectual honesty should have demanded that the use of a modern term be appropriate.

Even from the point of view of physical geography Prof. Coupland's regionalism has no meaning. In his discussions of the river zones he blissfully ignores the river basins when it suits him. Rajputana is not on the Indus. Bengal which he takes out of the Ganges Delta

practically depends upon the Ganges and its tributaries. Orissa which is lumped together with the Ganges Delta has a river system of its own and has nothing to do with the Ganges basin or with the Rajputana States. The Deccan has no river system of its own. Even the exploiters of the Tennessee Valley Scheme met with disastrous consequences at first. The valley itself was converted into a dust bowl. It required all the power of a democratic national government of an independent country like the U. S. A. to set matters right.

Vagaries of nature can be rectified by deliberate collective human effort. But the vagaries of intellectuals as the instruments of imperial policies are bound to prove disastrous to the course of Indian history. But probably I am doing Prof. Coupland an injustice. It may be that his Regionalism is only a label. Its only purpose may lie in its geo-political insinuations. In fact, the only suggestion is that India should be split up into warring zones. But none of them, nor all put together, will have or acquire the strength or the ability to combat external power and maintain internal unity. The disposition of power which Prof. Coupland's Regionalism envisages is the old story of the Balance of Power under British hegemony in the garb of a new term applied to colonial conditions.

## XIV

### THE APPROACH TO SOLUTIONS

The solution of a problem depends upon the nature of approach and so it must be in the case of the Indian Deadlock. Many and varied have been the ways in which it is approached and it is necessary to examine them.

#### *A. The British Die-hard Approach*

This approach is based on several assumptions. The British Empire as a world trustee of weaker people is the last word in human progress. It is to be maintained in tact. The Britishers, therefore, for a long time to come must remain the guardians of India, and rule it with a British army of occupation. Democratic institutions may be introduced for Indians to play with, so long as real power is in the hands of a bureaucracy which is guided and controlled in the province and the Centre by British officials taking their orders from the British Secretary of State. In order to achieve this end the Constitution should be so manipulated that divisions may be multiplied in India and the real centre of power may continue to remain at Whitehall.

The determining factors already discussed make this approach both unworkable and anachronistic. It is impossible to revert to bureaucratic rule. The Constitution Act of 1935 and the Declaration of March 1942 will



stand in its way. India, the liberal British opinion and world forces will not permit it.

### *B. The Approach of the Left Wing Congress*

This approach rules out the possibility of what is termed 'a truck with British Imperialism'. Hindu-Muslim antagonism according to it is of no importance, if not altogether unreal; Dominion Status is a badge of slavery; any constitutional compromise is worse than a repressive regime. It looks forward to recurringly larger waves of revolutionary mass movements—may be non-violent; to the time when the British will surrender power into the hands of the leaders of the last successful of such movements leaving India united and independent.

Many live or have died for this approach. But in the light of the present situation, it cannot help to solve the present deadlock.

The Indian Deadlock has come into existence as a result of the British policy. This policy is designed to the end that India should not acquire such power and strength as would compel Britain to let go her Indian possessions. To achieve this end Hindu-Muslim antagonism which had disappeared for all practical purposes before the British rule had been converted into a dominant feature of modern Indian life. Disruptionism, its product, now bars the way to all political progress. A subsidiary feature of this policy has also been to mobilise the Scheduled Castes, the Indian Princes, the British interests and such other pawns to obstruct the

formation of a National Government in which the British would not have a controlling voice. Britain, therefore, will not withdraw its support from Disruptionism nor would it permit an advanced measure of self-government unless it does not carry the power to secede from the Commonwealth and it does not weaken Britain in the international field or impede her recovery after the war.

So far as one can see, no external circumstance is likely to arise in the near-distant future which will force Britain to give up India. Nor does there appear any immediate possibility of a mass movement on such a scale as would succeed in wrenching independence from British hands. In all cases, except perhaps in Ireland, a revolution has attained success only when the national army of the old regime has come over to it. So far as one can see there is no prospect of an Indian National army coming into existence before a national government is formed. This approach, therefore, must be ruled out in practical politics.

### *C. The Gandhian Approach*

It is difficult to gauge Gandhiji's reaction to all the aspects of the present situation. But if one could discover it in his recent utterances, his approach is characterised by these objectives: (a) to come to Hindu-Muslim understanding on the basis of a just concession of a Muslim State if the Muslims desire it, with a common agency for all Indian federal subjects; (b) to organise the constructive activities so as

to rebuild the hold of the Congress over the masses on a broader foundation ; and lastly, to maintain unsubdued the spirit of resistance by individual civil disobedience whenever need arises.

The approach is calculated to generate popular power. It conceives a political compromise only when there is a genuine negotiating mind on the other side. This approach can be a great positive factor in solving the deadlock if the British Government exploits it for implementing the Declaration of March 1942 and reviving provincial autonomy in the Congress Provinces. But at no time will it be possible for the British or other parties to work any constitution which Gandhiji and the Congress decline even to acquiesce in. Unless the transfer of power is substantial so as to attract some national support, mass civil resistance will certainly reduce any popular government into a parasite of British military rule.

#### *D. The Hindu Mahasabha Approach*

The Mahasabha swears by Indian unity. It wants a democratic state based on 'one man, one vote' principle. It hopes to scrap the separate electorates and the McDonald Award. According to it, the rule of the majority that is of Hindus, should prevail. How this ambitious ideal is to be achieved is not clear. Today it has no sanction either in number or coercive corporate activity. As a positive force it has little value, for it supports the British policy against the Congress on the one hand, and

the Muslim League on the other. If the British Government allies itself with the Muslims to disrupt the Hindus or destroy their destiny the Sabha will gather strength. Even in the ranks of the Congress there is a very substantial section which has not been slow to realise the implications of the failure which has met the Hindu-Muslim Unity programme of the Congress.

#### *E. The Muslim League Approach*

The present Muslim League approach was vaguely formulated by Mr. Jinnah in his article in *Time and Tide* of January 19, 1940. He stated: "A plan must be evolved that recognises that there are in India two nations, but both must share the governance of their common motherland. In evolving such a constitution, the Muslims are ready to co-operate with the British Government, the Congress or any party so that the present enmities may cease and India may take its place among the great countries of the world". But then the Congress was expected to return to office, and the British policy had not put a premium on Mr. Jinnah's veto. So the approach envisaged two nations, one motherland, one State, and one India in the international sphere.

The present approach is entirely different. Muslims of India are a nation wherever they are. They alone have a right of self-determination; the N.-W. F. P., the Punjab, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Assam, except for minor territorial adjustments, must be handed over to

the Muslims as their homeland ; the Hindus in this territory have to be second class citizens of a nation state, the full fledged citizenship whereof is based on religious belief ; the state is to be sovereign and has to be made economically self-sufficient at the expense of Hindus.

The approach is unrelated to practical politics. Britain is not likely to favour a Disruptionism which will conceivably be a greater menace to her interests in India than Nationalism, and certainly a danger to the security of the frontier. An approach of this kind, if pursued, will not lead to a solution, but to the intensification of the Hindu-Muslim antagonism. If Britain concedes this claim it will launch India on a career of full fledged civil war. Even if it is not conceded, the Muslims will not reconcile themselves to any constitution, unless it gives the Muslims an opportunity to consolidate themselves into a single zone.

#### *F. Approach of the Constitution Act of 1935*

The Constitution Act approached the Indian problem from the point of view of giving to India responsible government in the provinces and a federal centre which in course of time may evolve into a Dominion government. The idea behind it was to create a strong constitutional framework for the whole of India. It made due provisions for the protection of minorities and for the quasi-independence which the Indian States enjoy today. Except that the special powers and responsibilities of the Gover-

nor-General and the Provincial Governors were left ample and unfettered, subject to the mandates of Whitehall, the Constitution created an Indian State with plenary powers. The electorates were broadbased and genuinely democratic in spite of its separate electorates, weightage and reservations.

The power of the Congress and particularly the Rajkot incident made the Indian Princes nervous about their dynastic security. They hesitated to transfer their allegiance from the White Political Department of the Crown Representative to power derived from their own people. The War sent the Congress out of office and the British raised the Frankenstein of Disruptionism. The result has been unfortunate. A Constitution which in spite of its shortcomings had great merits and considerable elasticity was shelved during the war, as if by common consent.

Given the same spirit of adjustment at the Centre as prevailed between the Ministries and the Governors between 1937 and 1939 and a few vital changes the Constitution is capable of emerging as a full fledged Dominion constitution for India.

In spite of the fact that the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League came to a tacit understanding to reconsider the constitution afresh, the approach to the Constitution Act of 1935 is the most formidable. It has created an institutional structure of great

strength for India. Its principal features cannot be ignored in any future solution. The Federal Court, the Reserve Bank of India, the framework of the provincial and central governments, the division of powers, the statutory weightage and reservation for minorities, are things which exist and have grown deep into the political life of the country. No constitution framing body can ignore them, or alter them beyond recognition. Nor would such alteration lead to anything but confusion worse confounded.

No doubt some points of view which have come into existence since 1940 may like to destroy the approach altogether. The extremists amongst the Disruptionists will not like it. The Left Wing Congress would certainly like to make short work of it. But when constructive political thinking comes to the aid of a solution, it would be difficult to find a better starting point than this Act.

Prof. Coupland has done a great harm to India by providing a fictitious contractual basis for the Constitution and then urging that it should be scrapped on the ground that that basis has disappeared. According to him moderate Muslims at the Round Table Conference agreed to a federal government on the basis of the implications that the provincial autonomy was to be real; the Central government was to be a coalition government; that the Indian States were to come in as a counter force against Hindu-Muslim

differences ; and the special responsibilities of the Viceroy were to be maintained. The learned professor then charges the Congress with having broken this basic contract in that it tried to extend the logic of majority rule in the Centre by extracting from Provincial Governors the assurance of non-interference ; by introducing Muslim mass contact campaign ; and lastly by seeking to establish a responsible government in the States.

This ingeniously suggested contractual basis came to be known only when Prof. Coupland's imagination came to the rescue of the British policy which was interested in modifying the Act. In fact all the statesmen who were parties to framing the Constitution were afraid that it was a final one ; that the responsibility of the Governor-General and the Governors was to be eliminated by internal pressure. The Congress was never a party to the so-called contract. On the contrary it was framed behind its back. It was given statutory form when the Congress was in jail. And it never professed to do anything but break it. Indeed the framers of the Act never dreamt that the Congress will use the Act for the advancement of freedom so swiftly.

Prof. Coupland and the British experts like him now want to scrap the Act, not because it was not a well-devised constitution, but because it was possible within its four corners to secure the transfer of real power from the hands of British Governors to the Ministries.



Today six Provinces in India out of eleven are functioning under this Act. The remaining Provinces are also being ruled by the Governors under the powers given under the Act. A tradition has sprung up round the Act. It is, therefore, impossible to conceive that the approach of the Constitution Act can be completely ignored in any future solution.

The Declaration of March 1942 was only an advancement on the approach of the Constitution Act of 1935. The Union of India was not to be far different from the Federation of the Constitution Act. The provinces were to remain the same except that any one of them had the liberty to vote itself out of the Union to form a separate Dominion. The rest of the structure was to remain as it was except in so far as it had to be altered to make of it a full-fledged Dominion Constitution. That Declaration stands and the approach of the Constitution Act as remodelled by the Declaration naturally provides the approach to a future solution.

Of all the factors which have to be taken into consideration in finding a solution the most powerful factor is, therefore, the institutional frame-work imposed by the Constitution Act of 1935 and its logical advancement towards Dominion Status laid down by the Declaration of March 1942.

There is no likelihood of all the elements in the country agreeing to any form of constitution. Equally, there is no possibility of the present deadlock being maintained endlessly.

A just solution which reconciles these points of view in some measure, allays British distrust and eases the Hindu-Muslim tension, will, if imposed, be a success.

The solution, whatever it is, must be of a permanent nature and must be built on the foundations that exist. Since 1919 the British attempts to make constitutional changes have led to a chronic state of uncertainty in matters political, and a constant atmosphere of coming changes has enriched the breeding ground for impossible demands. The weakness of Lord Linlithgow in not bringing into existence the Federal Part of the Constitution Act of 1935, in spite of his great desire to do so, was a disservice rendered by him to India. Any attempt to drastically change things which have grown into the life of the country would only lead to disaster.

## XV

### THE SOLUTION IN THE IMMEDIATE PRESENT

#### *I. The Problem*

The object is to find a solution of the communal problem from a constitutional and political point of view so that the deadlock may be resolved and India may attain solidarity and freedom. I have stated the problem a little widely, for the communal problem is the result of the political problem. Till the latter is

solved, the former will remain insoluble. The following analysis is an attempt to appraise the realities of the present situation in order to find a way to solve the problem in the immediate present.

## *II. The Factors*

The factors which have created the situation from which the political problem and incidentally the communal problem arises are as follows :

In view of her stakes, Britain has no intention to transfer power to Indian hands during the war, and finds a safe pretext that all parties and interests in India are not substantially agreed on the solution.

The Muslim League which has acquired great strength by helping Britain to carry out her intention, declines to come to any agreement with the rest of the country unless—

(a) Muslims are accepted as a separate nation ;

(b) N.-W. F., the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam except for minor territorial adjustments are carved out as Muslim homelands ;

(c) Congress withdraws its declared opposition to the British rule by withdrawing the August 1942 Resolution which is held 'inimical to the ideals and demands of Muslim India'.

The Congress will not co-operate in the governance of the country or in the war effort

unless effective power in the Centre is transferred to the people of India.

The States refuse to join in or work with any common political organisation unless their present nominal sovereignty is converted into a real security against the growth of popular power in the country.

### *III. The Influences at Work*

The influences operating upon the situation are :—

British fear of Indian Nationalism ;

Institutional and international position of India created by British rule ;

The non-co-operative technique of the Congress as the principal instrument of Nationalism ;

The disruptive urge of the Muslim League.

The principal influence which has created and maintains the situation is the British fear of Indian Nationalism as a power seeking the independence of the country. This factor finds expression in different policies of which the most important are those which attempt to atomise the national strength by fostering disruptive tendencies—

(a) religious,

(b) economic, or

(c) dynastic.

The British policy of converting religious minorities into anti-national forces in the

country in order to retain a hold over India has reached its highest effectiveness in creating the Hindu-Muslim problem of the day.

In 1909 Britain induced the Muslims to demand, and cheerfully conceded, separate electorates, admittedly with the object of 'pulling away sixty millions of Muslims from the seditious movement'.

From 1919, Britain trained the Muslims, through the reactionary leaders thrown up by separate electorates, to make aggressive demands, and by granting favours, turned them, to use Lord Oliver's words, into 'a make-weight against Hindu nationalism'.

Since 1925 Britain has encouraged the conversion of the Muslims as a religious minority into a national minority.

In 1933, by Macdonald's Award, Britain, without reverting to the joint electorates, conceded most of the Muslim demands, which were at one time demanded by the Muslims as a *quid pro quo* for them :

(a) guaranteed a majority vote in the Punjab and Bengal by statute; and

(b) formed provinces which would form a Balance of Power between Hindu and Muslim Provinces.

In 1939 when the Congress gave up its alliance with Britain by withdrawing its ministries, Britain—

(a) encouraged the Pakistan Movement;

(b) gave to Muslim League the right to veto any political progress;

(c) set up and maintained League Ministries; for instance, in Bengal with the help of European votes supported the ministry even under circumstances in which any ministry in Hindu Provinces would have been dismissed.

In the Cripps Offer, Britain conceded the right of any province to go out of India and form a separate Dominion, the effect of which, if worked out sedulously under British influence, would be to interlace two dominions in the whole country and perpetuate friction.

The officially advertised Regionalism of Prof. Coupland encouraged the Muslim ambition by proposing the division of both Hindus and Muslims into four different States with different nationalism and a helpless Agency Centre which must necessarily rely upon British Governor and British troops for strength.

The same policy, with equal success, is being attempted with smaller religious communities.

The Sikhs were, and to a large extent are, nationalists. After some of their leaders interviewed Sir Stafford Cripps, there is a clear line of thought perceptible in the community which hopes to have a little state of their own. It is an idea at present; it can germinate easily if a few British promises are forthcoming; and another obstacle to national unity would have been erected.

The Gonds of the Central Provinces a few years ago never dreamt that they were not Hindus, nor would they appear non-Hindus in outlook or general habits. The fact that they eat beef and have two or three other distinctive habits peculiar to their forest life and not commonly found among Hindus, was found sufficient for the official policy, now adopted for several years, recognising them as a distinct non-Hindu community.

Of late the Backward and Aboriginal tribes are being proselytised to Christianity with vigour under quasi-official patronage with a view to create another politically conscious atom out of the nation.

Simultaneously, the policy of fomenting distrust between classes on an economic basis is being pursued.

In the early stages of the Congress the policy took the shape of the British Officers posing as guardians of the dumb millions against the nationalists. When this policy failed, the British Officer became the protector of the agriculturists against the exploiter city class.

When the Gandhian movement absorbed the agriculturists in the fold of nationalism, this policy was directed to convert the economically submerged scheduled classes into a politically conscious independent group which when required can serve as a disruptive force. This policy has assumed different shapes during the last twenty years :

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(a) The Macdonald Award split the scheduled classes from the bulk of the Hindus, though Gandhiji's fast averted the disruption of Hindu solidarity;

(b) As in the case of Muslims, a policy has been adopted of encouraging high-pitched claims on the part of the Scheduled Classes and creating situations wherein the rest of the community can come to be considered as their natural enemies;

(c) Even though as a result of the elections of 1937 the Congress parties in the legislature had more Scheduled Class members inside than outside of them, the leaders outside the Congress only were recognised officially as the leaders of the community. The national-minded Scheduled Class leaders were made unrepresentative of their community for governmental purposes and thus deprived of their influence over the community.

(d) Whenever on account of weak and divided coalition ministries the British Governor is effectively in power, the Scheduled Class members are nursed, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal, so as to prevent them from allying themselves with members of the Hindu community. In pursuit of the same policy as in the case of Muslims, some leaders of the Scheduled Classes are encouraged to speak in terms of their being a political or national minority.

(e) The recent utterances of British statesmen have also encouraged the anti-national Scheduled Class leaders to claim that they be



invested with some kind of veto on the political progress.

The latest phase of this policy is to try to create in the post-war period a separate privileged group of soldiers all over the country. Plans are afoot in all provinces to create conditions in which, not the individual soldier, but soldiers as an independent group will be treated with favours, thereby hindering their re-absorption into the body politic. With this object in view, for instance in Bombay, the post-war agricultural grants have been ear-marked only for those areas from where soldiers have been drawn and in proportion to the number of soldiers recruited. I would not be surprised if attempts are made to create a distinctive political group out of these soldiers by concessions of special votes, seats and political rights.

The British policy with reference to Indian States has a similar objective and is directed to—

(a) keeping them completely helpless and dependent upon the Political Department;

(b) encouraging them to distrust any alliance with British India in working out the destiny of their country.

Before 1857 the policy was to destroy the power and independence of the Indian States and to strengthen British India. After 1857 Canning, on his own admission, adopted the policy of making them the instruments of British Imperialism.

The quasi-independence of the Indian

States has practically disappeared during the last 80 years. The recent merger is the latest culmination of this policy.

On the other hand, steps are being taken to wean the Princes away from British India lest they may increase national power. About the time of the Round Table Conferences the doctrine of their sovereignty was raised into a psychological barrier against association with British India. The barrier was raised only against British India without in any manner improving their position *vis-a-vis* the Paramount Power.

Later the Princes were encouraged and helped in suppressing popular movements in their States. Between 1937-39 more than one instance are before the country wherein attempts on the part of an Indian Prince to come to an understanding with the popular movement in his State, were either thwarted or prohibited by the Political Department.

One of the contributory causes of the success of this policy, it must be admitted, has been the demands of the extreme section of the Congress and Praja Mandals to eliminate the dynastic rule or to deprive the rulers of their power completely. This drives many of the Indian Princes into the arms of the British policy in the defence of their dynastic rule.

As a bye-product of the same policy an economic programme is devised so as to throw the demand for political freedom into shade :

Vast plans are being made, which will

employ a large number of men who are expected to stand loyal to Government.

Propaganda is being carried on and will be carried on in favour of such plans with a view to sidetrack political demands. Recent speeches of British statesmen that the Indian problem is economic are part of a settled plan.

The factors arising from these policies are often attributed to intolerance of certain sections of Indians, to totalitarianism of the Congress, a desire of certain sections of Indians to have their legitimate place, or to the British responsibility in India.

In fact these form part of the well-known technique of British diplomacy tried successfully all over the world. It should, therefore, not be forgotten that many disruptive symptoms in this country are not the result of inherent weakness but the results of this technique.

Another operating factor of the greatest strength which is generally ignored by Indians is the institutional unity of India brought about by the British rule. For 160 years British rule has maintained peace in India and established and maintained institutional continuity.

For over 80 years a more or less unitary form of government exists in this country and it has been intensified during the last five years.

The Government of India Act of 1935 has reared an institutional fabric for the whole of India which has already created a great tradition in this country.

The Draft Declaration of March 30, 1942, has placed before the country an objective, higher than which it is impossible to achieve by negotiations.

(a) The very existence of British influence in Asia depends upon India being a compact unit so far as the international sphere is concerned.

(b) The traditional institutional continuity and the united political life of the country set up by British rule will not be broken up easily, and if broken, will lead to disastrous consequences.

(c) Even if by some kind of solution the country is divided for internal purposes, Britain herself will certainly maintain the integrity of her military and naval frontiers of India so that the internal disruption of India will not destroy her position in the world.

Another operating factor in the situation is Nationalism of which the Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi is both the instrument and architect. It has for its objective—

(a) a single nation state for India; and

(b) independence from foreign control.

The technique of the Congress in the hands of Gandhiji, has been to generate power in the Indian masses independently of the administrative machinery. The principal objectives of this technique are—

(a) To build up a vast network of construc-

tive activities which organises, trains, and energises the masses.

(b) To withdraw its association from the official machinery whenever there appears a danger of the disintegration of national strength.

(c) To start civil disobedience movements in different shapes to consolidate national forces and render the Government without active popular support.

(d) To provide a huge framework of power and influence which draws in every Indian outside the Muslim League, and renders it difficult, if not impossible, for any other group from having influence with the masses.

This technique has rendered it impossible for a strong centre party to come into existence for the purpose of exploiting the official machinery for the country's good or conserving the political rights already acquired when British Government is actually suppressing the national movement.

In pursuit of this policy—

(a) In 1939 the Congress gave up ministries;

(b) In 1942 the Congress declined the Cripps Offer;

(c) Today the Congress will not go back to the provinces or have a coalition government unless it has secured a substantial power in the centre or strengthened its position by a pact with the Muslim League independent of mere collaboration within the Government machinery.

The Muslim League is no longer merely an instrument of British policy. It represents an urge, among the Muslim masses and many thinking leaders,

(a) to have a separate homeland in India ;

(b) to overawe the Hindu majority in order to dominate the country ;

(c) to possess the freedom to join a Pan-Islamic consolidation which ardent spirits imagine to be the ultimate destiny of the faithfuls.

The urge is not very powerful yet, and may not survive the withdrawal of British support of the League against Nationalism. The ministries of Bengal, the Punjab, N.-W. F., Assam and Sind only utilise the Pakistan slogan for political purposes, and are essentially dependent upon the British Governor. Their communal outlook has largely flourished on the acquiescence of British Governors and the supineness of the Hindu ministers of these governments.

The situation may be thus summarised :—

The British do not want to share any power during the period of the war. She does not desire to offend the League which has been so helpful.

The Congress has been isolated, and cannot go back to power unless it gives up its creed and motive force—

(a) by accepting weak coalition governments in the provinces ;

(b) by facing a schism between its Gandhian and its revolutionary wings ;

(c) by accepting the partition of India before India attains independence.

The Muslim League will not compromise with the Congress because a compromise—

(a) will mean the loss of British support ;

(b) will lead to its ranks being thinned by the withdrawal of its pro-Government section, which is by no means small ;

(c) the fanatic urge, which has given it strength so far, will become weak.

#### *IV. The Essentials of a Solution*

A search for a solution is necessary but it must not be lost sight of that solutions sought for in hurry and implemented in impatience never bring any lasting solution of genuine difficulties. The Act of 1935 gives India institutional integrity ; the Constitution which it gives is both stable and elastic and has created a fabric of power in which Indians are loosely associated. Provincial autonomy under it is bound to be restored. Its federal part cannot be kept back for ever, nor general elections be postponed indefinitely. India cannot be divided as easily as ardent disruptionists think ; nor for the matter of that freedom be ushered except when the world settles down to post-war reconstruction and that not all at once. A Nationalism, built on old tradition and a century of growth, can survive many attempts at a break up. Time often brings in a better and a more

enduring solution than the hurried efforts however well intentioned they may be.

A friendly solution, apart from accidents, can only come when circumstances come into existence in which—

(a) it will pay Britain to part with power;

(b) the nationalist determination to have a nation-state with an appropriate international status is carried out ;

(c) the League aspirations for an autonomy free from Hindu domination is somewhat satisfied ;

(d) the ambition of the Indian Princes for a quasi-sovereignty and dynastic perpetuation is fulfilled.

These four being contradictory, any solution must necessarily proceed on the footing of a reasonable compromise of these claims and ambitions.

It will pay Britain to substantially part with power, when it will no longer be possible to retain it. The circumstances which can possibly lead to this result are many.

At the end of the war, it may be safely assumed that Mr. Churchill's power will go and more democratic influences will be at work with the British people.

America though sentimentally for Indian freedom will only be helpful if her interests in Asia demand it. This will depend upon the post-war situation in East and South-East Asia.

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The spread of Communism in India might drive Britain to join hands with Nationalists. Looking to the situation in Europe, it may be taken for granted that this factor will operate in India's favour.

Mr. Jinnah has lately given a shape to his Pakistan demands which Britain will not be interested in encouraging. It will not be surprising if the British statesmen withdraw their support from the League and come to a reasonable settlement with India as a whole.

In spite of persecutions from 1942-44 the Congress has emerged sufficiently powerful not to permit any constitution which it disapproves from functioning. Attempts to satisfy Nationalism therefore may be expected.

At the same time nationalistic strength in India is not sufficient to make Britain give up its policies and decide to part with power all at once. It will, however, do so, if—

(a) there is no possibility of India breaking away from the Commonwealth, or joining Britain's enemies in international matters for at least a generation or two;

(b) the period of transition to full-fledged power is sufficiently long to enable Britain to revive after the war and recapture or stabilise her hegemony over these parts of Asia; and

(c) there is substantial support in the country for a solution which secures to Britain's conditions (a) and (b);

(d) her policy of side-tracking politics by economic schemes fails.

The policy of side-tracking politics, in the nature of things, cannot succeed. Vast economic plans must imply raising the standard of living of masses; which in its turn would mean—

(a) industrialising India, and

(b) imposing protective tariff.

If these are introduced British industry will suffer and the political urge will pass from Nationalism to Communism, labour becoming a tremendous factor of power. A Nationalist Government depending upon Britain for political strength and guidance in the early years will certainly benefit Britain commercially and reduce the possibilities of Communistic danger. This all along presupposes that British labour does not go over to Communism; if it does India is sure to be benefited.

This policy of doles will not help Britain in her attempts to atomise the nation. The soldiers and war workers, however lavishly pampered as distinct groups, are of the people. Once they reap the harvest of their services, their education and standard of living will increase; they will begin to smart under the stigma of slavery in their own country; and disaffection against the British will drive them to strengthen Nationalism. The new officers are nationalistic to a man and realise all too acutely that they are fighting only to fasten British domination on their Motherland.

From these circumstances it appears clear that Britain must come to terms with Nationalism and give to India a substantial measure of freedom consistent with her retaining her strength and influence in the international sphere.

But these factors operating upon the British desire to part with power can only bear fruit if Nationalism is content to accept as its immediate goal the objective of the Draft Declaration of March 30, 1942 and not otherwise. The objective runs as follows :

“The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.”

An acceptance of this objective by a substantial section of Indian opinion would allay British fears and forge the link of a stable alliance between Britain and India.

At the same time Nationalism cannot reconcile itself to any solution of India's problems unless—

(a) there is one framework of power for the whole country ;

(b) internal adjustments are so made as not to deny internal solidarity for all time.

Under any solution which does not fulfil

these conditions Indian nationalism must liquidate itself.

The case for a single political framework and a single centre with plenary power is unanswerable. With it alone India can be a great country with international influence.

An India with more political frameworks and centres than one will—

(a) lead to a denial of India's future as a great country in the international field ;

(b) introduce geographical, religious and political complications of a far-reaching character which will throw the country into a melting point ;

(c) perpetuate British hegemony over warring States in India.

The different centres proposed are as follows :—

The Centre as envisaged by the Hindu Mahasabha will draw its sanction from a majority party elected from joint electorates with reserved seats for minorities on a population basis.

The Centre as provided by the Act of 1935.

The Centre as suggested by Gandhiji in his letter to Mr. Jinnah and called by him a Central or Joint Board of Control for 'safeguarding' defence, commerce, communications and other essential purposes.

The Agency Centre as suggested by Prof. Coupland in his scheme of Regionalism, which

will only carry out the mandates of the four states, into which India is to be divided according to his proposals.

These Centres are arranged according to the degree of strength contained in each.

A country of the magnitude and international frontiers like India simply cannot exist without a compact Centre of power which can save it from external aggression and internal difficulties. A Centre under a democratic government can only fulfil this condition if it has the support of the largest party in the legislature. If it is weak or divided it must rely upon foreign aid to supply the deficiency, which, in the case of India as things are, must necessarily be British.

The Centre No. 1, as envisaged by the Hindu Mahasabha, is out of question in view of Indian conditions.

The Centre as provided by the Act of 1935 possesses power drawn from two sources :—

the British Viceroy as possessing special responsibilities and as H. M.'s representative looking after defence ; and

the popular parties from whom his ministers would be drawn.

It is, therefore, a strong Centre and with the growth of popular strength under a Dominion Constitution possesses sufficient elasticity to attract the full strength which is now vested in the Government of India.

The proposals of Gandhiji can be analysed as follows :—

A Commission approved by the Congress and the League to demarcate the boundaries of the Muslim areas in which the Muslims are in an absolute majority.

A plebiscite of the Muslim areas to be taken for separation.

If the Muslim areas vote for separation, two states of Hindustan and Pakistan have to be formed after India is free from foreign domination.

The treaty of separation shall provide for the efficient and satisfactory administration of foreign affairs, defence, internal communications, customs, commerce, and the like which are subjects of common concern.

The administration shall be by a Central or Joint Board of the two states which will safeguard these subjects against all who may put the common interests in jeopardy.

The Congress and League therefore having secured independence by a joint effort under the leadership of a National Government will hand over the right and the power to the Central Board to exercise the authority in matters of common interests. This, therefore, is a Centre less compact than a federal Centre, but certainly quite as plenary within the limits of its jurisdiction. Its strength and sanction will be derived not merely from the willingness of the two governments to maintain it but from the means of enforcing its will which it will inherit

from the National Government. The Centre is hypothetical and based on conditions like independence which are not likely to come into existence in the immediate present.

Out of the proposal for two Centres in the country, the proposals of Mr. Jinnah and of the Draft Declaration of March 30, 1942, agree in that they are to function with the support of British arms. The Draft Declaration calls the two divisions of India two Dominions and leaves the option of seceding with each pro-province. Mr. Jinnah's scheme calls them sovereign States and gives the option only to Muslims, but all the same wants the British arms to maintain the two States till they learn to behave. Both the schemes therefore imply the perpetuation of British hegemony for maintaining the partition as also peace between the two States. Under both these, therefore, the common framework of power keeping the two Indias together and the maintenance of the internal frontiers as also the international frontiers will rest with Britain.

Rajaji's formula, in so far as it envisages two sovereign States working together by alliances and treaties, is unreal. No states have worked together or imposed upon themselves the rule of law without being disciplined in a framework of law which has the sanction of force behind it.

The choice, therefore, lies between—

(a) A single Centre in which the British are associated with India's representatives, and

which evolves conventions by which the British element loses the power in proportion to the increase in the strength of the popular element to maintain itself ; or

(b) A Coalition Centre, internally divided and unsupported by the sanction of a single strong party, which will maintain its cohesion as well as its power internally and externally with the aid of the British Viceroy and British troops.

(c) Two Centres which so far as their mutual relations and the common international frontiers are concerned must depend upon the strength and diplomacy of the British.

In Centres (b) and (c) British hegemony will be perpetuated and vital matters will be placed at the mercy of Britain. In the (a) Centre by slow degrees the British control will be reduced in proportion to the Indian strength to maintain it. There can, therefore, be no real choice between a Centre with a British Viceroy advised by Ministers supported by a strong party which will slowly reduce the Viceroy to a Constitutional monarch and a weak Coalition Centre which will be exploited for British purposes. When British advisers advise us to accept coalition centres, they know their implication ; they will perpetuate British control. Two Centres, however compact, with Britain to keep the ring will only reproduce the days of the East India Company and the so-called independent states of that period.

Religious bond either of Hinduism or of



Islam or for the matter of that of any religion is never so strong in the modern mind as to form a powerful group sentiment overriding the urge of territorial Nationalism. If Indian Nationalism is undermined by the concession of two Centres provincial nationalism will grow, letting loose forces of disruption and making British hegemony stronger. Other aspect of the case against Partition has been dealt with by Prof. Coupland in chapter X of his *'Future of India'* and by Dr. Shaukat Ansari in his *'Pakistan'*. If Nationalism with its concrete base of India and its spearhead, the National Centre, is destroyed the destiny of the country will be frustrated for centuries. If a choice has to be made, immediate patchwork solutions must be sacrificed.

The Act of 1935 provides a framework of power for the whole of India and all attempts at solution must lie in the direction of only modifying it to suit the needs of a solution. Provincial autonomy under the Act backed by a strong party is real, despite cracks at the expense of Congress ministries. The Centre, given a strong public opinion behind the ministers, is elastic enough to develop into a strong Centre responsible to India if only a few statutory modifications are made. The provincial division, the composition of legislatures, the suffrage, the central framework, the Supreme Court, the Reserve Bank, and the vast unitary organisation which has become necessary to meet the war situation and the economic post-war reconstruction of the country should not be trifled with.

Any such attempt will throw the whole political and economic fabric into confusion and lead, not to a solution, but to a disastrous outburst of disruptive forces.

One of the major difficulties of the situation is to secure the consent of the Congress to work the Act of 1935 modified and implemented in the light of the objective of the Draft Declaration of March 30, 1942. Any such consent must necessarily imply a willingness on the part of the Congress to part company with the revolutionary elements, if need be. No organisation can function in power successfully if its primary object is to break the framework through which it is operating. If a solution, therefore, has to be found there is no escape from one of the three courses—

the Congress should decide to operate through the governmental machinery set up as a result of the solution. This implies the acceptance by the Congress of the objective of the Draft Declaration and going back to office;

the Congress should sanction the formation within itself of a party like the old Swaraj Party, the object of which would be to work through the constitution but not with the object of breaking it; or

the Congress should assume an attitude of benevolent neutrality or at least passive non-acquiescence towards the formation of a strong national Centre Party.

If the Congress does not adopt any of the three attitudes, there cannot possibly be

any solution of the present deadlock. Things must continue to drift till—

(a) the Congress becomes so powerful that it secures a surrender of power from the British; or

(b) it becomes so weak as to permit a Centre party to come into existence despite its opposition.

At the same time no solution as things stand can possibly be reached if the Congress wants to ally itself with the Muslim League only in order to fight the British. No sacrifice on the part of National India, however great, will induce the League to ally itself against Britain. This was clearly stressed by Mr. Jinnah when he declared that the Resolution of 8th August was inimical to Muslim India. Indian Nationalism has attained the strength to stand against Britain and League combined. But it has not yet the strength to overcome them both nor by its very nature can it offer such inducements as would tempt the League to abandon British support. The Indian situation, during the last twenty-five years, is the result of a clash between the National Will to Freedom and the British Will to perpetuate the subjection of India. The present deadlock is essentially a passing phase in the clash of these Wills, whatever may be our illusions about it. A solution must represent an effort to suspend the clash by a compromise. Any proposal of compromise which leaves out the British and the Congress is, therefore, sure to fail.

It must also be realised that some sacrifice must be made to Muslim sentiment, though no sacrifice worth making will satisfy Mr. Jinnah's present demands. In this connection certain circumstances cannot be ignored.

The Muslim desire for autonomy and for living a life of its own in some part of India unfettered by Hindu influence has grown very keen in recent years.

The Pakistan Movement has opened the old sores of antagonism between the two communities and they will not be healed without some effective remedy.

But a search of such a remedy must be consistent with the conclusions which are fundamental to any solution, *viz.*,

(a) the acceptance of the objective of Draft Declaration of March, 30, 1942, as the immediate goal by all parties to the solution ;

(b) the acceptance of only one Centre for the whole of India with plenary power.

The desire for autonomy and for consolidation on the part of Muslims carry with it the following implications :—

(a) The demarcation of predominantly Muslim areas, in which Hindu-Muslim tension is reduced to a minimum by leaving the smallest number of Non-Muslims possible.

(b) Giving to such areas the largest possible autonomy consistent with the two fundamental conclusions reached above.

(c) Liberty must be given to such areas to come closer together if they so desire so as to evolve a common life.

The cry that the Muslims do not enjoy autonomy in certain provinces is incorrect. In N.-W. F., Sind, and the Punjab and Bengal the Muslims have a free hand within the limits of the provincial power. Their culture has unfettered scope for development. In a sense they form a Muslim zone of India. Ministerial rule prevails there ; Section 93 in Hindu provinces.

Parts of Bengal and the Punjab which have been occupied by an absolute majority of Muslims have to be constituted as separate provinces, if a Muslim Zone has to be demarcated. The Rajaji formula, which provides for such a demarcation, is the only fair basis. The formula makes the division conditional upon several events. But the perpetual war of nerves in all spheres of life between the communities makes it clear that the communities will not be able to settle down and escape the sense of frustration unless the Provinces are divided into two even under the existing Constitution. The Hindus of the Punjab and Bengal are averse to any such partition. But, if a large measure of autonomy has to be conceded to the Muslim Zone as a matter of appeasement, the Hindus of these Provinces must decide for themselves whether they would prefer to remain in their home province without the active protection from the Centre, or leave it to join their co-religionists in the rest of India.

Partition by plebiscite, however theoretically perfect, is a dangerous measure. It will imply a tremendous emotional upheaval, letting loose flood tides of passion and propaganda, and making the communal feeling worse. In view of the two fundamental conclusions which I consider inalienable, the Provinces may be split into two as part of the solution by negotiation with leading Hindus and Sikhs rather than by a plebiscite.

The Zonal division as desired by Mr. Jinnah in so far as it includes a larger number of Sudeten Hindus in Muslim areas is unjust and dangerous.

(a) It demands an unfair sacrifice on the part of the Hindus who are as much entitled to consolidate Hindu areas as the Muslims are entitled to consolidate them.

(b) It does not proceed from a genuine desire to maintain Muslim solidarity but of having a large tract of land for Muslims to rule over.

(c) It will intensify the communal tension in the country and the war of nerves in the provinces.

Prof. Coupland's Regions are devised to fragment India in British interests and will never allay Hindu-Muslim tension.

In view of the fundamentals aforestated the largest possible autonomy would imply that the Muslim areas should be at liberty to vote themselves out of the jurisdiction of the Centre in respect of the subjects in the Concurrent

Legislative List of Schedule VII of the Act of 1935. In this event such areas will be controlled by the Centre only as regards the subjects in the Federal Legislative List. The Hindu provinces have a general desire to stand together and have a national Centre. There is no reason why they should be asked to give up the concurrent jurisdiction of the Centre because the Muslim provinces desire a larger autonomy.

This leaves the question of the States Zone. The merger schemes will reduce the number of the State units. The States have also developed a greater cohesion on account of the Chamber of Princes. The fear of the Princes that they will be worse off under a federation is imaginary and fast disappearing on account of the inroads made on their power by the Paramount Power. On the contrary, in a federation,

(a) the autocratic control of the Political Department will be replaced by the control of the Federal Centre of which the States will form an integral part ;

(b) the dynastic prestige will be secured by the Instruments of Succession ;

(c) and if necessary, a further guarantee can be given by which the Chamber of Princes can be given a definite place in the Constitution.

### *V. The Solution*

On the lines of the solution there will, therefore, be three Zones in India—

The Hindu Zone over which the Centre will have jurisdiction as to the subjects in the Concurrent List as also in the Federal Legislative List.

The Muslim Zone over which the Centre will have jurisdiction only as regards the subjects in the Federal Legislative List.

The Princes Zone over which the Centre will exercise jurisdiction if the States joined the federation.

In order that the three Zones should have a recognised place in the Constitution, the Council of State should be constituted of equal representatives of the Hindu Zone, the Muslim Zone and the Princes Zone, as against roughly 116 for the Hindu Zone, 33 for the Muslim Zone and 104 for the States as at present.

(a) This will temper the attitude of the Legislature which will continue to be formed as in the Act of 1935. The Assembly will represent the Union of India, the Council of State its three Zones. Till the States decide to accede, the two zones can constitute the Council.

By the nature of this constitutional compromise four things would have been achieved.

(a) The country will be recognised as formed of three Zones :

- (i) the Hindu Zone,
- (ii) the Muslim Zone,
- (iii) the Princes Zone,

to reflect the three group sentiments which



dominate Hindus, Muslims and the Princes respectively.

(b) The National bond which keeps them together will be represented by the Assembly and the Ministry which it will support.

(c) The British Indian Muslim Zone and the Princes Zone will have as great a measure of autonomy as is consistent with a Federal Centre.

(d) The Upper House will recognise the constitutional difference between the three zones.

A fear is being entertained by the League and the Princes that the autonomy of the Muslim Zone and the Princes Zone will be interfered with by the Centre. This fear, if honest, can be removed if, like the Senate of U.S.A., the Upper House, in which the three Zones will be equally represented, is vested with legislative and executive authority in federal matters of vital importance. It can then safeguard the interests of Zonal autonomy against the Central executive.

As is well known the Senate in U.S.A. is not a second chamber ; it has a distinct primacy in the democratic system of that country. It is an organ of government. It can propose or amend financial bills. Important external affairs like treaties can be negotiated only by the Executive with the concurrence of 2/3 of the Senate. Its advice and consent is necessary for nominations to important posts like those of ambassadors and judges of the Supreme Court.

If the Council of State in the Indian Constitution is made the co-ordinating agency of the three zones with wide powers, there would be sufficient safeguard against any encroachment on the autonomy of the Zones.

(a) The Upper House will be a second chamber with regard to all matters except those which are essential for maintaining the autonomy of the zones and for safeguarding their distinctive interests;

(b) the Executive will be responsible to the Assembly and will be strong with the strength of the party in power in that house;

(c) the power of the Executive in distinctive matters affecting a particular zone will be tempered by the Upper Chamber in which each of the zones will have an equal voice.

If the suggestion is to be rendered workable the size of the Upper Chamber must be reduced to such small proportions as to enable it to act with swiftness and secrecy. The American Senate had 26 members only for this purpose to start with.

## *VI. Concrete Proposals*

From the considerations aforestated the following proposals follow :—

Britain must implement its promise made in the Cripps Offer by a formal Declaration in the Parliament that H. M.'s Government intends bringing into existence a Union of India which will constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions

by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, and in no way subordinate in any aspect of domestic or external affairs.

The British must create a healthy atmosphere by—

(a) a general release of political prisoners and political detainees not implicated in pro-Axis activity and not held guilty of crimes involving violence ;

(b) by restoring the normal constitution in the Provinces to which Sec. 93 of the Act is applied ;

(c) by reconstituting the present Executive Council of the Viceroy so as to include therein a majority of members pledged to carry out the Compromise Formula ;

(d) by setting up a representative Committee to suggest modifications in the Act of 1935 which would carry out the Declaration aforesaid and such other modifications as may be necessary to carry out the Compromise Formula ; and

(e) by deciding to bring in the Federal Part of the Act as soon as all the Provincial Legislatures begin to function.

The component zones of the Union of India shall be :—

- (i) the Hindu Zone ;
- (ii) the Muslim Zone ;
- (iii) the Princes Zone.

For the purpose of the division of the country into Zones the contiguous areas in the Punjab and Bengal which have an absolute majority of Muslims should be formed into separate provinces.

The areas of those Provinces in which the Muslims are not in an absolute majority should be formed into separate provinces unless the non-Muslims in such districts decide in a suitable manner to be included in the Muslim Zone.

On the Federal Part of the Act of 1935 being introduced, the Provinces of the Muslim Zone, by a majority vote in their respective Legislatures, shall be free to decide by an absolute majority the provisions of the Act which give the Central Legislature power to make laws in respect of the subjects in the Concurrent Legislative List of Schedule VII of the Act. On such decision suitable changes shall be made in the Act modifying the said provisions accordingly.

The Council of State shall be constituted of not more than 45 members out of which

(a) 15 members shall be elected by an electoral college consisting of all the members of all the Provincial Legislatures in each of the Hindu and Muslim zones by the method of a single transferable vote ;

(b) 15 members shall be elected or nominated by such of the States as have acceded to the Federation.

By Statute the Executive shall be bound to exercise some powers only when supported by a 2/3 majority vote in the Council of State; and

(a) the appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court, Ambassadors and High Commissioners and other foreign representatives and the Directors of the Reserve Bank;

(b) the alteration of the boundaries of the Provinces and States;

(c) The making of any changes in the Constitution Act;

(d) the altering of the Fundamental Rights of citizens.

No bill relating to communal matters shall be passed by the Central Legislature unless it has received the support of an absolute majority of the Council of State.

Financial Bills can also be introduced or amended by the Council of State.

Six members of the Council of State will be re-elected every two years in equal proportions from each zone.

Ten years after this Compromise Formula is incorporated in the Act and is brought into operation the Constitutional problem shall be reviewed by a Constituent Assembly of 55 members elected by the Assembly and the members of the Senate sitting as a single house.

All parties and interests who support the Compromise Formula must pledge themselves

actively to support the war effort, if Britain carries out its part of it.

The Compromise Formula must be accepted as final during the Transition period, all parties to it pledging to maintain its integrity.

The period from putting forward the Compromise Formula by the Sapru Committee till the expiry of six months from the time the changes suggested thereby are brought into operation under the Amended Act shall be known as the 'Transition Period'.

During the Transition Period the Congress should—

- (a) support the Compromise Formula ;
- (b) form a parliamentary party itself to work out the Compromise Formula ;
- (c) support the parties who desire to work it out; or
- (d) at any rate not prevent them from working it out by opposition or by offering mass civil disobedience in case such parties help in forming a government.

The Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League should give similar support or adopt similar attitude of acquiescence.

(1) The Sapru Committee must immediately convene a Convention which will focus all opinions in the country and become an instrument of securing the support of all parties to the Compromise Formula.

The Sapru Committee, with the aid of the Convention, should convert itself into a Centre Party which will draw men anxious for the solution during the Transition Period from all

parties and which will secure the support or at any rate acquiescence of other parties and interests in the country.

If the Convention is not supported by any one of the parties or interests concerned, the Centre Party should still continue to work for the Formula by inviting the support of such of them as are willing to do so.

If the Congress does not support the Compromise Formula or form a Parliamentary Party, no result whatever could be achieved unless the Sapru Committee or the Convention or the Centre Party drops the role of a group of men with high prestige and becomes the nucleus of a dynamic political party with country-wide influence and organisation.

I realise that the solution of the Indian Deadlock in practice is a difficult matter. The Muslim League will not come into any scheme of compromise. The Congress will find it well nigh impossible to jettison its old associations. Britain will not abandon her old policies easily. The Sapru Committee may not gather the strength to found a Centre Party; or the Congress or Britain might destroy the attempt, as they easily can. The Deadlock will then continue. Then perhaps another war or more effective mass movements will secure different results. The conclusions, however, are based on an objective analysis of the situation in December 1944. A few months gone and the kaleidoscope of Indian politics might form a new pattern requiring a different analysis altogether.







